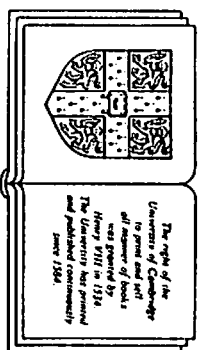


Monk and mason on the Tigris frontier

The early history of Tur 'Abdin

ANDREW PALMER



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For Kai, Christiane,
Rebecca, Molly, Thomas, Rosie, Isobel,
and, above all,
ANNE-MARIE
and for the
people of Tur 'Abdin,
especially my friend,
Ken'an

U křowano, lo qodarwayno d soyemno le,
d loweway li 'udrono man noře d fayřřno
gabayye bu řuro

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FIGURES

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PREFACE

Few historians of the Christian East are unaware of Tur 'Abdin, that remote limestone plateau around Midyat in south-eastern Turkey, where the Syriac liturgy is still performed in ancient churches by a dwindling enclave of Aramaean villagers and monks. With at least three millennia of autochthonous ancestors and a unique architectural heritage from the Late Antique period it is understandable that this mountain people is oriented towards the sunrise of its past. There was a time when Tur 'Abdin held a pivotal position between the empires and the churches of the East and of the West. Here monks were always the men of power, at first as liberators of the people from the world, the flesh, and the devil, then as oppressors in their turn and as the paymasters of ecclesiastical politicians. Today, though drastically reduced in numbers, they maintain their privileges and are recognized as the guardians of tradition.

The twentieth century, starting with the First World War, has done its best to complete the erosion of this outcrop of antiquity, which had survived twelve hundred years of Islamic rule before being washed by the high tide of European Orientalism. From 1880 to 1911 Tur 'Abdin was visited and studied by a number of scholars, who pioneered the geography, the epigraphy and the architectural history of the area. The work of Socin, Pogonon, Bell and Preusser is of a high standard. In the same period, the editions of Brooks, Chabot, Nau, Peeters and others made accessible all but a few of the written sources. By the time Krüger came to write his dissertation, *Das syrisch-monophysitische Mönchtum im Tur 'Ab(h)din* (1937-38), the foundations were already laid for an historical interpretation. But Krüger's study, the only forerunner of the present synthesis, is disappointing: it is inaccurate, shallow and fragmented.

Since then Gertrude Bell has been improved upon by Maria Mundell Mango and Wiessner has produced a systematic supplement to earlier work on the architecture of Tur 'Abdin, which makes up in thoroughness what it lacks in readability. Socin has found a successor in Helga Anschütz; and Pogonon has been supplemented by my own corpus of inscriptions, published in 1987. Some important new editions have appeared, but a number of rich veins in the hagiography of the region are first mined in the present book.

The literature of Syriac studies is not intentionally obscurantist; but certain conventions make its references misleading to the outsider. 'Ps.-Dionysius' is not the ps-

Areopagite but a simple monk who was mistaken by an eighteenth-century prelate for the patriarch Dionysius of Tell-Mahre. That monk may have been Joshua the Stylite, of the monastery of Zuqin, near Amida; but the text generally referred to as 'Joshua the Stylite' is not by him but by an unknown author from Edessa, who wrote more than two and a half centuries earlier. It is the aim of the present author to make his source references self-explanatory, so that the reader can see at a glance whether he is dealing with a chronicle or a saint's *Life*, for example. If it is the latter, the reference shows whether it is totally legendary or approximately biographical; if the former, the reader is reminded succinctly of the chief critical coordinates. 'Ps.-Dionysius' is here referred to as *Chr. Zuqin* 775, 'Joshua the Stylite' as *Chr. Edessa* 506. The conventional names are to be found in the list of sources and in the index locorum.

The first four chapters and part of the fifth form an extended commentary on the *Qartmin Trilogy*. The *Lives* of Samuel, Simeon and Gabriel are combined in this text with a number of building records from the late fourth, early fifth and early sixth centuries. Such is the interest of these records that the corresponding archaeological remains must be studied exhaustively beside them (Chapters 2 and 4). During six months at Qartmin Abbey (now called Mor Gabriel, or Dayr al-'Umr) in 1977-8 and on subsequent visits the author carried out the first survey of a whole monastic complex in Tur 'Abdin. With better equipment and training, and with permission to excavate, a much better survey could have been made.

To people the monuments and to reconstruct a model of monastic life from the fourth to the eighth century, sources from outside Tur 'Abdin were used, notably John of Ephesus' *Lives of Eastern Saints* and the unpublished *Life of Theodosios of Amida*. In Chapter 3 it emerges that the coenobitic life, in Tur 'Abdin as around Amida, was not considered an ideal in itself, to be carefully distinguished from the eremitic; the individual ascetic champion, represented by the stylite and the recluse, had a place at the centre of the community of lesser monks, for whom his life was the very pattern of the ideal.

Source criticism has been neglected in much of the literature on Tur 'Abdin and the West-Syrian community in general. Here it comes to the front of the stage. Neither chronicles nor hagiographies can be treated as suppliers of straightforward information. Only by distinguishing levels of composition, sources and motivation can the historian assess the value of the constituent parts. One example from Chapter 5 is the identification of Daniel of Tur 'Abdin as the source for much of what Michael copied from Dionysius of Tell-Mahre; for Daniel enjoyed inventing tales of intrigue, in which anyone connected with Qartmin Abbey was invariably accused of the blackest treachery.

The present study hardly trespasses beyond the confines of the Roman province of Mesopotamia and the Arab province of Jazira; yet it throws light on economic and social conditions in an important frontier region during its transition from a sense of integration in the Byzantine world, through the painful discovery of a separate identity, to the status of a distinct, but subject and vulnerable culture under Islam. There is comparative material here from fresh texts and inscriptions which cannot be neglected by the student of the 'Dark Age' between Muhammad and Charlemagne.

For the history of architecture, not only Chapters 2 and 4, but also the Appendix on

the early inscriptions of Tur 'Abdin contain indispensable new data. The Appendix combines an historical (often socially orientated) commentary with a survey of the epigraphic phenomenon in the region. Many of the inscriptions are cited entire; no knowledge of Syriac is required.

A dozen of the sources are not yet fully published. Two of these, the *Qartmin Trilogy* and the *Book of Life*, are edited and translated on the microfiches published with this book. The manuscript from which the *Book of Life* was photographed is the work of Kenan Budak. Both editions are provisional; the *Book of Life* was added as soon as it became available, but it was too late to rework the end of the Introduction.

I hope this will not be a 'definitive book': if I have done reliable groundwork on the texts and inscriptions and have enabled and inspired others to include them in general historical debates, my most important aim will have been achieved. Far from wanting to have the last word, I hope to make Tur 'Abdin the subject of controversy, another rich field in which to test interpretations of Late Antiquity. The region is already well known to students of early Christian architecture, but my work should give theirs a firmer basis in local archaeology, epigraphy and text criticism. Illustrations of the archaeological remains have been provided, although reference has been made, where possible, to Bell/Mango, *TA* and Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, which the reader should have at hand.

My interest in the subject stems from my first acquaintance with the area in 1977-8. Samuel Aktaş (at that time abbot of Mor Gabriel, now bishop of Tur 'Abdin) made that and subsequent visits (in 1980, 1984 and 1986) possible by his hospitality. İsa Gülten (Malfono or 'teacher' at Mor Gabriel) gave me an excellent grounding in Syriac and encouraged my intention to write for the English-speaking world a companion to Dolabani's *Syriac History of the Holy Abbey of Qartmin*.

My own formation, begun by my parents and teachers, was rounded off at Worcester College, Oxford. My epigraphic and editorial interests owe a great deal to the late Dr L.H. Jeffery and to Dr M. Winterbottom; and I hope that the influence of the late Martin Frederiksen can be detected in my historical approach.

After Malfono İsa, my teachers in Syriac were Prof. Dr J. Abfalğ (Munich) and Dr S.P. Brock (Oxford). The latter guided my research with patience and wisdom, 'in sickness and in health'. There is no need to dedicate this book to him: it is his, for he planted the seed and tended the growing tree. Nor is it possible entirely to distinguish his part in this from that of his wife, Helen. No one will imagine that this makes them responsible for my mistakes.

It is easy to name all the institutions that supported me, impossible to thank all my friends and interlocutors. The abbey of Qartmin, Wolfson College (Oxford), the Department of Education and Science of Her Majesty's Government, Christ's College (Cambridge), the British Academy, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Bonn) have all made my research and my field trips financially possible. I have worked in many libraries where the staff were very helpful and I do not want that courtesy to go unmentioned. In the Near East one is shown manuscripts as a personal favour; the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus (Mor Zakay I), the Patriarchal Vicar in Istanbul (Chorepiskopos Samuel Akdemir), and the late Rabban Gabriel 'Allaf of Mardin have put me particularly in their debt. Nor could I have done without the many

helpers who assisted me in my archaeological and epigraphic researches. Most recently Hero Hokwerda travelled to Turkey and brought back with him a copy of the precious *Book of Life*, which was paid for by the Humboldt-Stiftung.

Dr G.L. Fowden and Prof. Dr H. Kaufhold read the whole typescript of this book, except the Appendix, and made improvements and corrections. Concrete and useful suggestions were made by Joyce Reynolds, Prof. Averil Cameron, Kai Brodersen, Prof. Dr J. Abfal, Prof. J. Emerton, Dr Marlia Mundell Mango, T. Sinclair and Dr O.P. Nicholson. The following responded positively to my appeals for help in various points: A. Astefo, Prof. Sir Harold Bailey, Prof. Dr R. Degen, Prof. M.-J. van Esbroeck (S.J.), Dr N. Gendle, F. Graffin (S.J.), Dr M. Hinds, R. Jeffery, Dr H. Kennedy, P. Khoroché, Dr M. Krebernik, Dr J. Lowden, Dr Lyn Rodley, Dr M. Rogers, Dr Susan Walker, Dr R. Weipert, Drs Mary and Michael Whitby, and Dr W. Witakowski. I regret that two relevant publications by Witakowski reached me too late to improve this book: 'Chronicles of Edessa', *Orientalia Suecana* 33-5 (1984-6), pp. 487-98 and *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahrê: A study in the history of historiography*. *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 9 (Uppsala, 1987). Since my manuscript was submitted in 1986, only minor changes have been possible. I have also been unable to take account of [L.] M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988).

I am grateful to the Publications Committee of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge and to the editors of the Cambridge University Press for encouraging me to write a book for this series. Sylvia Sylvester and Margaret Clements have typed it, and Drs. Jan Ginkel helped with the index. The last stages, while I was in Munich, Jerusalem and Groningen, were particularly difficult. Only a benign conspiracy between our friends, Kai and Christiane Brodersen and my wife, Anne-Marie, has made it possible for me to work with small children. It is with heartfelt thanks that I dedicate this book to them all and to all Turoye everywhere, of whom Ken'an, the son of Denho of Kfarbe, is one. His family abandoned their ancestral home only when there were no other Christians remaining in their village, in 1988.

As this book went to press, I heard of the death of Liesl Cornet, whose late husband's photographs adorn this book. Liesl and Hannes fostered my research from its conception in Tur 'Abdin to its birth, for they first showed me the monuments described here and Liesl had a copy of the proofs open beside her when she died.

Andrew Palmer

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Transcription

This book is not aimed at specialists in oriental languages so much as at historians. Consequently, diacritical symbols are kept to a minimum in the text. Vowel length, for instance, is only given in the index; aspiration is shown by the letter 'h' after a consonant or by the substitution of 'v' and 'f' for 'b' and 'p'. In the List of Sources and in the Bibliography, Syriac titles are given in a way recognized by specialists. In the text, however, I have represented Syriac words, where necessary, in a simplified form based on the West-Syrian system of pronunciation, with 'o' for 'a' and 'u' for 'ô' and without doubled consonants. (On this last point there is some inconsistency, for example where a name, like Addai, is well known in another transcription, or where the doubling needs to be emphasized.) Syriac names are anglicized where possible, elsewhere they are given in transcription. The anglicized forms are given in the index with the Syriac transcription in brackets after them.

The name 'Tūr 'Abdīn' is already widely familiar in that form (as opposed to 'Tūr 'Avdīn'). It is legitimate in a non-philological study to write it 'Tur 'Abdin' or even 'Tur Abdin'; in this book I have compromised by writing 'Tur 'Abdin'.

Purely consonantal transcriptions are given in capitals. In transcribing Greek names, I have chosen the Latin form where it is familiar. Persian names are transcribed, as advised by P. Khoroché (Cambridge), according to the state of the language in Sasanian times.

Chronology

The Seleucid era

The Syriac sources (most of them Syrian Orthodox) employed in this book generally date events by the 'year of the Greeks' (or 'of Alexander').¹ These formulas refer to the Seleucid era, which began on 1 October 312 BC as far as all non-Melkite Syrians were

¹ Chr. *Eljah* 1018 also gives the Hijra year (AH).

concerned, although the Monophysite *Chr. John Eph.* 585, on account of the author's long involvement with Constantinopolitan affairs, contains at least one use of the Byzantine calendar year, beginning on 1 September.² An example for the conversion of Seleucid dates would be: A[nn]o G[raecorum] 1024-312/1 = AD 712/13, i.e. the twelvemonth between 1 October 712 and 30 September 713.

Chr. Edessa 540 contains a date for the birth of Mani, taken over by *Chr. Elijah 1018* and others, which is clearly of foreign provenance: Honigsmann and Maricq show that it was originally the date of the beginning of Mani's prophetic career, according to the slightly different, lunar era of Seleucus prevalent for some time in Babylon.³ This is a quite exceptional case, which has no further implications for the chronology of the Syrians.

L.M. Whitby has established that a number of dates in *Chr. John Eph.* 585 for the latter part of the sixth century are one year too early;⁴ the same is true of one date in *Chr. Qartmin 819*.⁵ My investigation of the date of the death of Gabriel of Beth Qustan seems to show that the record of his funeral was originally dated one year too early, in AG 959.⁶ These mistakes in the chronicles give some credibility to Mingana, when he claims that 'the computation of the years of the Seleucids varied in the Syrian churches between 309 and 313 BC'.⁷ Mingana's immediate purpose was to resolve the 'difficulty' concerning the synchronism of the Nestorian monument in China with the patriarch Hnanisho', which he attempted to do by arguing that the Nestorians used an era beginning in 313 BC.⁸ But *Chr. Elijah 1018*, with its precise parallel Seleucid and Hijra dating, in a manuscript which is probably of the author's hand, is sufficient to refute his argument. As for his contention that the fluctuation of Seleucid reckoning was 'a well-known fact among Syriac scholars', it cannot be reconciled with the silence of all Mingana's contemporaries on the subject.

In these circumstances it seems best to put irregularities down to some other cause, such as faulty conversion from another writer's reckoning, or reckoning forwards from a falsely 'established' date, than to an undemonstrable plurality of eras among the Syrians.

For the conversion of Hijra dates to those of the Christian era, I have used B. Spuler's revised third edition of the *Wissenfeld-Mahler'sche Vergleichungstabellen zur muslimischen und iranischen Zeitrechnung* (Wiesbaden, 1961).

The months and the days of the week

The months used by the Syrians were those of the calendar of Antioch, which corresponded exactly to the Julian calendar in the distribution of days (see V. Grumel, *La Chronologie, Traité d'études byzantines*, 1 (Paris, 1958), p. 174. It therefore seems unnecessary to burden the reader with the unfamiliar names of the Syriac months.

Given the year and the day in the month it is possible to calculate the day of the week,

² T. Nöldeke, *ZDMG* 29 (1875) p. 32; Bernhard, *Die Chronologie der Syrer* (1969), p. 117; cf. F.M. Abel, 'L'Ère des Séleucides', *Revue de l'histoire des sciences* 2 (1938), pp. 198-213.

³ Honigsmann/Maricq, *Recherches sur les Res gestae divi Saporis* (1953), pp. 32-3.

⁴ Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 172 n. 8, 175 n. 1; Whitby puts these errors down to faulty conversion. ⁵ Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 194 n. 7. ⁶ See pp. 156-57.

⁷ A. Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (Manchester) 9 (1925), p. 331.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 332-3.

even for the remote past. This can be very useful in checking the accuracy of dates if the day of the week is given or can be inferred. The table I have used for this purpose is that given by E.J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (1980), p. 60, fig. 8.

Topography

'Mount Masius' of the ancients¹ (probably also 'Mount Kashyari' of the Assyrians²) included the whole of the limestone massif between Mount Ayshumo (Karaja Dag) and the Tigris, most of which now belongs to the Vilayet of Mardin in south-eastern Turkey.³ Theophylact knows the same region as 'Mount Izala'⁴ and Sozomen mentions the names of monks who lived at both extremities of it as leaders of the monastic movement in the region 'around Mount Gaugalion'.⁵ 'Beth Gawgal' and 'Mount Izlo' are both known to Syriac literature from the early sixth century onwards, but, when their position is more closely defined, both seem to be attached to the south-eastern escarpment between Nisibis and Azakh (see p. 74). Other parts of the massif likewise have separate names in Syriac, the parts around Mardin being known as 'the Mountain of Mardin', the western extremity, facing Ayshumo, as 'Mount Aghlosh', and the plateau which forms the interior on the east side as 'Tür 'Avdin', 'the mountain of slaves'. East of Tür 'Abdin (as I shall write it), between Beth Svirina and Jazirat ibn 'Umar, is a geographically distinct area which has been identified with the Melabas Hills (Syriac: *Turo d-Malbash*, 'the clothed mountain', perhaps referring to the shallow layer of basalt which covers the limestone around Elim Dag, an extinct volcano); there is some overlap between this term and Zabdicene (Beth Zabday).⁶ In the north-west of Tür 'Abdin, above Şawro and Qeeth, is the range known as Mount Qoros; but there is no ancient evidence for this name.⁷

Tür 'Abdin itself is defined by a passage belonging to the most ancient and reliable level of composition in the *Life of Jacob of Salab* as a region lying between Mayperqat, Arzanene and 'the frontiers of Corduene' on the one hand and, on the other, Rish'ayno and Nisibis;⁸ but this tells us no more than that it was a part of the limestone massif of Mt Masius. Another definition, in the *Life of Gabriel*, appears to have been intended originally for a metropolitan diocese, which stretched from the Tigris to the river Harbo by Tella; an interpolator, who did not know the latter river, added 'all this region of Tür 'Abdin', because he thought Gabriel had been bishop of that diocese and no more (LXXXVII.9-12 (references of this type are to page and line of the *Qartmin Trilogy*)). The third and most exact definition is found in the *Legend of John of Kfone* and cannot be dated more exactly than 'after 900': Tür 'Abdin stretches between Fenek and the castles of Şawro and Mardin in the west, and from Mt Izala as far as Arzanene in the north.⁹ The author seems to mean that these localities are themselves just beyond the boundaries of Tür 'Abdin. That is certainly true of Fenek and Arzanene, which are on the far

¹ Strabo, XI.12.4; XI.14.2; XVI.1.23; Ptolemy, *Geography*, v.17.2.

² Kessler, *Untersuchungen*, section C.

³ cf. fig. 39; the clearest general relief map is that by O. Erol, in Hütteroth, *Türkei* (1982), fig. 26, opposite p. 94. ⁴ Theophylact, II.1.3-4. ⁵ Sozomen, III.14.30.

⁶ Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 249; *L. John of Nhel*, section 17 (cf. Ch. 5 n. 258).

⁷ Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, p. 814 (No. 286) *jabal qürus* (nineteenth century; cf. I. Armalet, *al-Mashriq* 16 (1913), p. 563). J.G. Taylor, *JGS* 38 (1868), pp. 281f gives this name to the range west of Mardin.

⁸ *L. Jacob*, fol. 177a.2; summary, p. 7. ⁹ *L. John of Kfone*, in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 16.

8. 1. Map of Tur Abdin (A.N. Palmer)

side of the Tigris, and of Mardin; nor was Mt Izala, the southern escarpment, counted by early writers as a part of Tur 'Abdin.

Did Tur 'Abdin include Hesno d-Kifo, a fortress on the Tigris opposite Arzanene? Hesno d-Kifo, as we learn from the *Life of Jacob of Šalah*, had a bishop in the fourth century, whose jurisdiction extended as far as Šalah and who resided in the Roman fortress with the governor of the region. One strand of the manuscript tradition preserves what is surely the original reading concerning the name of this region: Hesno d-Kifo was elevated by Constantius II to the capital of the *klima* of Arzanene.¹⁰ Arzanene was lost to the Romans little more than a decade after Constantius fortified Hesno d-Kifo;¹¹ it was the fact that the *Life of Jacob of Šalah* seemed to make a castle in Roman territory the capital of a region in Persian territory which made some scribe omit the word 'Arzanene'. But what seemed to him to need correction must be for us a strong point in favour of this passage. What remained of the territory of Hesno d-Kifo after 363 must have lain on the south side of the Tigris. A bishop of the 'castellum of Kēphas' was present at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.¹² It came under Amida in the Chalcedonian *Notitia Antiochena* of 570, while Tur 'Abdin came under Dara.¹³ If Šalah was in the diocese of Hesno d-Kifo while Ḥaḥ was the capital of Tur 'Abdin, this latter diocese may have included only the east and the south-east of the plateau. (Perhaps this is the explanation of the absence of Šalah from the early records made in Tur 'Abdin, the silence of which is not, however, necessarily significant.)

By the 750s Šalah was under the bishop of Tur 'Abdin, but that bishop, Cyriac, signed himself as the bishop of Hesno d-Kifo and Tur 'Abdin.¹⁴ This is the last sign of the old distinction in our sources. No bishop of Hesno d-Kifo appears in the official Syrian Orthodox Register of episcopal ordinations, which opens in 793 and continues into the late twelfth century.¹⁵

The southern and eastern borders of the diocese of Tur 'Abdin were identical with the international frontier, which will be described in the Introduction. This book is only tangentially concerned with what lies beyond that frontier. It has been less easy to isolate an area within the Roman empire. Tur 'Abdin is part of a geographical entity which stretches beyond its western edge and that edge itself is hard to define. It certainly did not include Mardin. The existence of the dioceses of Dara and of Šawro in the sixth and early seventh centuries (see p. 23) will have limited it still further as an ecclesiastical province, just as that of Hesno d-Kifo will have done in the north. Yet mediaeval tradition and native scholarship extend it as a geographical term to include Šalah, Šawro and the territory of Moḥallam, which lies west of the north-south road Kfar Gawzo-Midyat-Anḥel.¹⁶ I shall concentrate on what was undoubtedly the diocese of Tur 'Abdin, but, at the same time, I shall draw on information from the larger regions of which Tur 'Abdin was a neighbour or a part, including Amida and its vicinity, to help with the interpretation of the fragmentary local data. Tur'abdinian monasticism, in particular, can only be studied in this wider context.

¹⁰ *L. Jacob*, foll. 178a.1, 180a.1; summary, pp. 8, 11; Wright, *MSS London*, p. 1136, col. 2.

¹¹ Ammianus, xxv.7.9.

¹² *ACO* II.1.1, p. 59 (l.3.139); II.1.2, p. 202 (ll.2.131); p. 229 (ll.96.149); p. 283 (iv.1.125); p. 341 (iv.9.141); II.1.3, p. 452 (xvii.9.153); cf. vi, p. 92, for further references.

¹³ *Notit. Antioch.*, pp. 75, 83-4; *Fasti*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.23b, p. 470; cf. *INSCR.* B.1.

¹⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register, pp. 753-69.

¹⁶ Baršawm, *TA*, p. 167; cf. M. Streck, *El* iv (1934), pp. 942-9.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in the list of sources in the Bibliography and in references to sources in the footnotes are as follows:

<i>Cal.</i>	<i>Calendar</i>
<i>Can.</i>	<i>Canon(s)</i>
<i>Chr.</i>	<i>Chronicle</i>
<i>congr. byz.</i>	<i>congrès international des études byzantines</i>
<i>congr. orient.</i>	<i>congrès international des orientalistes</i>
<i>Inscr., Inscr.</i>	<i>Inscription(s)</i>
<i>L., LL.</i>	<i>Life, Lives</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legend</i>
<i>Lett.</i>	<i>Letter</i>
<i>Scr. Syr</i>	<i>Scriptores Syri</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tur 'Abdin</i>

Several journals and serial publications, as well as a handful of reference works, are abbreviated:

<i>Anal. Boll.</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques</i>
<i>CRAIBL</i>	<i>Comptes-rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium</i>
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i>
<i>DHGE</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques</i>
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Islam/Enzyklopädie des Islām/Encyclopédie de l'Islam</i>
<i>JGS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Mus</i>	<i>Le Muséon</i>

OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
Or. Lovan. Per.	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
Ostk. St.	<i>Ostkirchliche Studien</i>
Pauly	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertums-</i> <i>wissenschaft</i>
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
ROC	<i>Revue de l'Orient chrétien</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Introduction

1. The Tigris frontier

From the land of Katmukhi I set out and entered the pass of Ishtarate. In Kibaki I halted and spent the night. Cattle and sheep and wine and bronze cooking-pots, the tribute of Kibaki, I received. From Kibaki I set out and approached Matiate. Matiate and its villages I overcame. Two thousand eight hundred of its fighters I defeated in battle and much spoil I took from there. All those who had fled from my weapons took hold of my feet and I allowed them to continue living in their villages. I laid upon them in greater quantity taxes and tribute and agents of administration. I caused an image of my person to be made and I wrote on it the victory of my strength and set it up in Matiate. I overcame Bunu and the fortress of Masula and two villages near it. I defeated three hundred of their fighters. I took booty and set fire to the villages. From Matiate I set out and halted in Zazabukha, where I passed the night. I received the tribute of the land of Khabkhi, cattle, sheep, wine, and cooking-pots, tubs and armour made of bronze. From Zazabukha I set out and in Irsia I halted and spent the night. I burned Irsia and received there the tribute of Sura, cattle, sheep, wine and bronze cooking-pots. From Irsia I set out and in the midst of Mount Kashyari I halted and spent the night. I overcame Madaranzu and two villages in its vicinity and I took them and plundered them of spoils. I set fire to the villages. For six days in the midst of the mighty mountain of Kashyari – a difficult country, unsuitable for the passage of my chariots and my foot-soldiers – I worked that mountain with iron axes and bronze picks. Then I caused my chariots and my foot-soldiers to pass over it. From the villages on my path in the midst of Mount Kashyari I received cattle, sheep, wine and cooking-pots and armour made of bronze. I passed Mount Kashyari and came a second time to the lands of Nairi.

Thus spoke Assurnasirpal II, King of Assyria, when he crossed the plateau which is the subject of this book on his way to attack the region of Nairi, around Amedi on the Tigris.¹ The date of his campaign was 879 BC. It is by no means the earliest record of Mount Kashyari, but it is the most interesting. Not only are several of the village names still in use, even these types of farming and the same skill in metalwork are characteristic of the ancient Aramaic stock of Christians who are the hereditary inhabitants of the plateau.

More important, perhaps, for our enquiry is the information about the route taken by an ancient army and the geographical difficulties it encountered. The Persians left no

¹ Kessler, *Untersuchungen*, section C; I translate from the German.

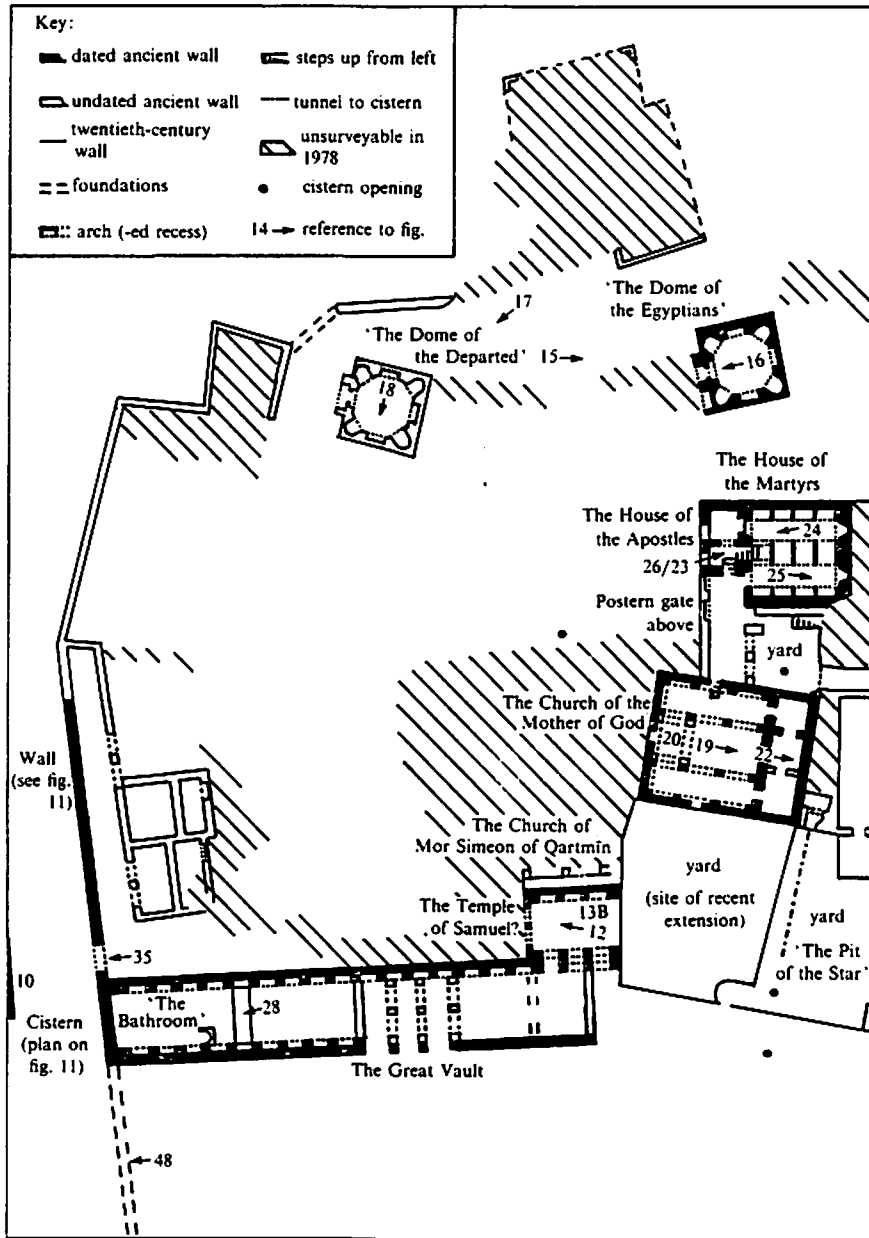
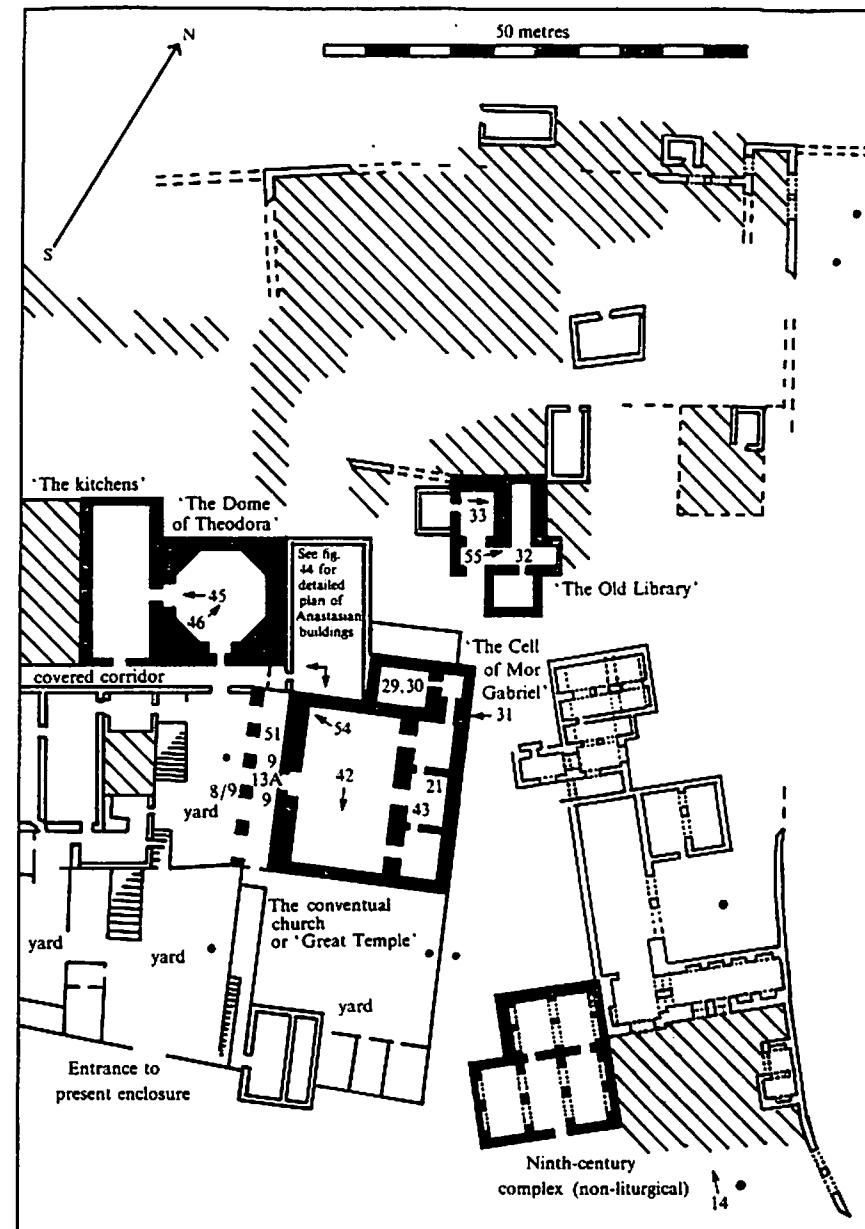


Fig. 2. Plan of the abbey of Qartmin (A.N. Palmer)



record of their campaigns in this area, where several times they thrust into the Roman empire in the direction of Amida (Amedi); but it is likely that they entered and left the plateau by the same route as Assurnasirpal. That route passed very close to the future site of the fourth-century monastery which, through its archives, its traditions, its buildings and its inscriptions, is the chief witness to the internal history of ʿTur ʿAbdin: the abbey of Qartmin.

Qartmin (as I shall often refer to it, distinguishing the eponymous neighbouring settlement as 'Qartmin village') may have been built where it is to accommodate peaceful travellers;² its situation also made it vulnerable to invaders. It was twice sacked by the Persians. Yet, in the early period at least, there persisted the belief that the sanctity of the monks could ward off hostile forces of every kind, as the first bishop of Nisibis, Jacob, was widely reported to have saved the city from a siege by his prayers.³ Qartmin stood at a major gateway into Roman territory; perhaps this explains why it was repeatedly showered with gifts by the remote emperors in Constantinople.

After 363, ʿTur ʿAbdin was, for two and a half centuries, the furthest-flung bulwark of the eastern Roman empire. The notorious treaty negotiated with the Persians by Jovian after the death of Julian in Mesopotamia created what may be called the Tigris frontier. Nisibis was ceded without a blow, leaving Amida the most important city on the eastern borders. Constantius had already fortified it, guarding the approaches through Arzanene and along the route of Assurnasirpal with forts at Hesno d-Kifo and on the southern escarpment of ʿTur ʿAbdin.⁴ These new forts now became castles on the very frontier.

It was agreed that the Nymphios (Batman Su) should mark the limit of Roman territory to the east of Amida,⁵ but south-east from the city it projected into Persia, including Hah, Qartmin and the castle of ʿTur ʿAbdin, and returning along the crest of the escarpment to rejoin a north-south line a few miles to the west of Nisibis.⁶ The exact outline of this salient is not known, but the steep-sided gorges of the Tigris and its tributary opposite the castle of Fenek surely formed a natural division of territories.

Most probably, the frontier followed the Tigris eastwards from its confluence with the Nymphios and southwards through its canyon to its confluence with the tributary which drains the central part of ʿTur ʿAbdin. It then followed that stream westwards for a few miles up its equally spectacular canyon ('the valley of Gehenna') to the village of Hespis, if that is the Hiaspis placed by Ammianus (xviii. 5. 3) on the frontier. In order to rejoin the south-eastern escarpment of ʿTur ʿAbdin, another natural fence, it had to cross a featureless field of basalt several miles across, giving relatively easy access through a

² See Ch. 3, *ad fin.*; Dillemann imagines the monks 'ensuring the surveillance of the route which traverses the mountain from west to east' (*Mésopotamie*, p. 229).

³ P. Peeters, *Anal. Boll.* 38 (1920), pp. 286-8. ⁴ See p. 6. ⁵ Procopius, *Wars*, I.21.6.

⁶ Dillemann, *Mésopotamie*, p. 233 fig. XXXII, where, however, the frontier goes too far north of the escarpment. Dillemann asserts (p. 230), without evidence, that the sources of the Mygdonius were, after 363, in Persian territory and mechanically extends the frontier eastwards from those waters; but even if it were shown that the Persians claimed the sources, the frontier is still likely to have rejoined the escarpment. The supposedly Nestorian monastery of Mor Malke lies to the north of this line and Nestorianism is associated with Persian territory, but in fact there is no evidence that the monastery was originally Nestorian; indeed, the form of its church is distinctively Monophysite (cf. Ch. 4, n. 133). T. Cornell and J. Matthews, *Atlas of the Roman World* (1982) is unique among the reference books in recognizing this salient (see map on page 220, drawn by Michael Whitby).

higher pass by Kivakh (Kibaki) to the interior of the plateau. At this point there was, in the sixth century, another frontier castle.⁷

There is no reason to doubt that the international division ran along the crest of the escarpment in the south-east. Procopius' description of the Castle of ʿTur ʿAbdin (*to Rhabdios*) has led some historians to place it (like an ancient West Berlin) in an isolated island of Roman territory beyond the frontier.⁸ But Procopius approached the castle from the direction of Dara by the plain. Between Dara and Nisibis he crossed the frontier, which was probably marked clearly on the road near the Persian border castle of Sargathon.⁹ He then walked along a road which, he was told, belonged to the Romans, with the steep escarpment of Mount Izala on his left hand, learning to his amazement that the land on either side for a great stretch of the way was Persian territory. Opposite the city of Sisauranon (Serwan), about 48 miles from Dara, he reached the end of this corridor and found himself in the so-called 'Field of the Romans', an area of excellent farmland below the rugged escarpment on which stood the Castle of ʿTur ʿAbdin. The castle itself was about three miles from Sisauranon.¹⁰

This description in no way excludes the possibility that the castle could be reached via the plateau of ʿTur ʿAbdin without setting foot beyond the frontier. The road on the plain was used by the Romans in peacetime because it was passable by wheeled transport (Procopius described the escarpment as 'utterly impassable to chariots and horses'¹¹ and Assurnasirpal II had found the plateau similarly rebarbative). The 'Field of the Romans' was presumably intended as a source of supplies for the garrison of the castle in peacetime, in return for which the Romans made available to the Persians a rich wine-growing village on the Mayerqaṣ side of the Nymphios.¹² The abbey of Qartmin also used the fertile plain of Serwan for its farming, planting a daughter-monastery there to supervise food-production and transport.¹³

Procopius gives the following outline of Justinian's work on the Castle of ʿTur ʿAbdin:

Now, this area had formerly been undefended and without any visible sign of Roman possession; it had never obtained from them a fortress or a bulwark or any other benefit . . . But the emperor Justinian . . . put a wall around *to Rhabdios* at the very edge of the precipice around it and thus made the place unapproachable to the enemy, with the help, of course, of the nature of the terrain. And since those who lived there were short of water, there being nothing in the way of a spring on the crest of the cliffs, he contrived two cisterns for rainwater, of which, by cutting many channels in the rock, he succeeded in making brimming treasuries of water, in order that, when the rain had collected there, the men on the spot might have to run no risks in obtaining a water-supply, thus making it less easy for them to be taken in war through being hard-pressed by lack of water.¹⁴

⁷ The castle of Mindon (Procopius, *Wars*, I.13.2-8, 16.7; *Chr. Amida* 569, ix. 5, p. 96) was in the Melabas Hills, Theophylact's description of which (II.10.2-3) suggests that they were in the south-eastern part of our plateau (Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 249; *id.* (With Mary Whitby), *The History of Theophylact* (1986), Map 4, *ad finem*); there is a suitable *tell* some miles to the east of Midun, the name of which village is probably derived (ND → DD) from that of the castle.

⁸ e.g. Dillemann, *Mésopotamie*, p. 233 fig. XXXII, followed by Bell/Mango, *T.A.*

⁹ *L. John of Tella*, p. 74: soldiers come down from Dara to the frontier to receive the extradition of John.

¹⁰ Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.14; *id.*, *Secret History*, II.24, might be understood as placing Sisauranon a day's march south of the frontier of Roman territory, but the previous section shows that the phrase is vague and means 'less than a day's march', besides which the steep escarpment below the Castle of ʿTur ʿAbdin would have forced soldiers to take a circuitous route. ¹¹ Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.14.

¹² Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.3. ¹³ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 205. ¹⁴ Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.10-13.

There is nothing to contradict the accepted identification of this castle with the Castle of Haytam (Qal'at Hatem Tay), first visited by Taylor, but Procopius appears, not for the first time in the *Buildings*, to have exaggerated the extent of Justinian's own contribution.¹⁵

A record preserved in Syriac in the *Life of Jacob of Ṣalah* gives the fortification of this mountain fastness a longer history:

Now, Amida was loved by king Qusṭos, the son of Qusṭanṭinos the Great, above all the cities of his realm, because he had built it. He subjected to it many regions, from Rish'ayno to Nisibis, Mayperqaṭ and Arzan and, further, to the frontier of Corduene. Seeing that these regions were near the confines of the Persians and that Persian raiding parties were continually coming up against these regions and taking captives, and that Ṭur 'Abdin was a region in the midst of these regions, he made in it two great and mighty fortresses to bring relief to these regions from the raiding of the Persians. One of them he built near the frontier of Beth 'Araboye, on the brow of the mountain; the other he built on the river Tigris, and this he called Ḥesno d-Kifo and made it the capital of that administrative region (*klima*).¹⁶

Constantius fortified Amida in 348/9 and Tella in the following year.¹⁷ It is logical that he should have built at the same time a number of forts to guard the highland approaches to Amida, just as Tella guards the low pass between Mount Ayshumo (Karaja Dagħ) and Mount Aghlosh.¹⁸ The Roman castle on the latter was already deserted by the end of the fourth century and may have belonged to the same Constantian system, centred on the defence of Amida.¹⁹

The *Life of Simeon of the Olives* contains a further record, giving the date at which the Castle of Ṭur 'Abdin was built and tracing its history until the late tenth century. It is clear that it has been tampered with by a writer without any conception of when the Arab invasion occurred, but it is equally evident that the same writer cannot have been responsible for the first date, which falls precisely in the year after the fortification of Tella:

Qusṭanṭinos, the son of Qusṭanṭinos the Great, built Amida and loved it more than all his realm. He subjected to it the regions of the East. Thereafter the Persians were prevented from going up to lay waste Roman territory, for they were no longer able to follow up the course of the river Tigris, Amida having been placed in their path. Then they began to launch their plundering campaigns against Roman territory from the plain of Beth 'Araboye. At once, King Qusṭanṭinos commanded his servant Demetrius [the general] to go down and build this castle in the year 622 of the Greeks [350/1]. It was called 'Demetrius' Castle', which is Qel'o d-Haytum. Once again, the Persians were prevented from coming up to lay waste the territories of the Romans. After a long period, however, the Persians went up and destroyed all the fortresses of Ṭur 'Abdin. They became very strong and mighty and drove out the Romans from the region of Ṭur 'Abdin, and Demetrius' Castle, together with all the others, lay ruined and deserted. Then, in the year 995 of the Greeks [683/4], [this] castle alone was rebuilt by Abraham and Lazarus, leaders of the region, through the efforts of the holy Mor Simeon, who asked them to assemble and send down to him

¹⁵ B. Croke and J. Crow, *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983), pp. 143–59.

¹⁶ *L. Jacob*, fol. 177a.2; summary, p. 7, where the variant of the London MS is given, naming the region as Arzan <ene> (cf. p. xxii). ¹⁷ *Chr. Edessa* 540, AG 660, 661.

¹⁸ Taylor describes this pass in *JGS* 38 (1868), p. 360.

¹⁹ *L. Daniel*, fol. 98b.2, 101a.1; summary, p. 61.

400 local men, stonemasons and labourers. With these he built it well; and the local people were all able to take refuge in it for a long time from the alarms and battles which occurred between the Romans and the Persians [!]. In the year 1062 of the Greeks [750/1] this castle was once more destroyed and torn down by Rumi, the leader of Ṭur 'Abdin, who reduced all its buildings to rubble and burned its gates with fire, because he saw that this mighty fortress was the cause of violent attacks against them. A little later came the Arabs, who destroyed all the cities of the East [!]. Then again, in the year 1283 of the Greeks [971/2] this castle was rebuilt a third time by the governor Haytum, who called it by his name.²⁰

For five years after the Seljuk raid of 1100/1, when the abbey of Qartmin was plundered and occupied by Turks, Haytam Castle again became a place of refuge for the monks and others; it was there that the precious *Book of Life*, which had been carried as far as Nisibis by the raiders, was lovingly pieced back together.²¹ But in the fifteenth century, as a Kurdish stronghold dominating the eastern part of Ṭur 'Abdin, it offered more danger than protection to the inhabitants of the villages and the tribute of wheat, barley, grape-molasses and raisins had to be delivered to it from the lands of Beth Svirina and Beth Man'em, in addition to blankets and various other products.²² Presumably, the Roman garrison had turned to these villages for supplies in much the same way when the plain of Serwan was closed to them by hostilities.

The Syriac appellation 'Castle of Ṭur 'Abdin' first appears in the *Chr. Qartmin* 819, which records its capture by the Persians in 604/5.²³ It is found again in the *Life of Aḥo*, where we read of 'Demetrius the Roman, who was in that castle to the south-east of [Aḥo's] monastery, which is called the Castle of Ṭur 'Abdin [*sic*]'.²⁴ Aḥo's monastery of Bnoyel is to be identified with Dayro d-Fum (Der Pu-e), to the north-west of Haytam Castle, as local tradition and a nineteenth-century colophon in Azakh show.²⁵ This passage thus provides confirmation that all the names refer to the same castle.

Ṭur 'Abdin, to sum up, was a garrisoned promontory of Roman territory surrounded by a 'sea' of Persian land. This is exactly how it was described by the eighth-century Arab writer Abu Yusuf Ya'qub:

Before Islam, Mesopotamia belonged in part to the Romans and in part to Persia, each people keeping in its possessions a body of troops and administrators. Ra's al-'Ayn [Rish'ayno] and the territory beyond it as far as the Euphrates belonged to the Romans; Nisibis and the territory beyond it as far as the Tigris belonged to the Persians. The plain of Mardin and of Dara as far as Sinjar [Mount Singara] and the desert was Persian; the mountains of Mardin, Dara and Ṭur 'Abdin were Roman. The frontier between the two peoples was marked by the fort named Sarja [Sargathon], between Dara and Nisibis.²⁶

The last great wars between the Persians and the Romans occurred late in the sixth and early in the seventh century. They were chronicled, most notably, by Theophylact Simocatta and the Anonymous Syrian whose chronicle was discovered by Guidi. In the Twenty Years' War (573–92), Ṭur 'Abdin played an important strategic role in the

²⁰ *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 207–8 [Dolabani, pp. 159–60]; summary, p. 181 n. 39.

²¹ *Book of Life*, extract in Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 91–2; cf. p. 224.

²² *Chr. Adai* 1503, fol. 197b.2, p. xlv. ²³ *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 916.

²⁴ *L. Aḥo*, fol. 184a; cf. Vööbus, *Aḥa*, pp. 25–6.

²⁵ 'Pray for our aged father, the monk Afrem, who dwells in Dayro d-Fum, that is, Mor Aḥo.'

²⁶ Abu Yusuf, p. 22; *FT*, p. 62.

conflict. Theophylact, who treats the whole limestone massif from ʿTur ʿAbdin to Mount Aghlosh as 'Mount Izala', describes the area and the people in the terms of panegyric, deriving, perhaps, from a local source:

Mount Izala is very fertile, for it produces wine and bears countless other varieties of fruit. The mountain is densely populated, and its inhabitants are fine men; the mountain is particularly exposed to attack, and is a subject of dispute, since the enemy do not live far away. You could not persuade these people to leave their contentious land, either by threats or promises, even though the neighbouring Persians frequently encroach on and plunder their territory.²⁷

There was even a native of ʿTur ʿAbdin, Theodore, among the field-commanders of the Romans at that time.²⁸ At least twice, in the 580s and again in the first decade of the seventh century, the Persians penetrated deep into the interior of the plateau.²⁹

The Persians finally conquered Mesopotamia in 613 and, although the emperor Heraclius won it back from them, it was soon lost again to the Arabs. In the years eighteen and nineteen of their new era, the 'sons of Hagar' took possession of the cities and the lands between the two great rivers, that is, in 639 and 640.³⁰ The international frontier shifted to the Taurus range and ʿTur ʿAbdin became a part of the vast Muslim empire. Its inhabitants remained Christian, however, and, in spite of the pressures of disintegration, the core of the ancient community survives to this day. The fourth-century monastery of Qartmin is still the most vibrant centre of culture on the plateau. In the villages, eighth-century churches, transformed over a millennium into forts, are still filled with believing worshippers three times a day.

The inner life of this community is the subject of two recent books by Europeans, whose interest was awoken by the recent phenomenon of the Turkish diaspora.³¹ That movement brought many Syrian Orthodox Christians to our countries. It is natural that their history, also, should be a fascinating study, injected with life by their presence among us. Already, the early Christian buildings of ʿTur ʿAbdin had attracted many visitors; but only a few could also read the chronicles, the saints' *Lives*, the ancient documents and the inscriptions which give insight into the world of those who built them.³² It is time to make that world more generally known.

2. The sources

The early history of ʿTur ʿAbdin must be written from two main sources, the brief, annalistic chronicle which was composed at Qartmin shortly after 819,³³ and the

²⁷ Theophylact, II.1.1-2; translated by M. and M. Whitby, *The History of Theophylact* (1986), p. 44.

²⁸ *id.*, II.10.6, from John of Epiphaneia, p. 274.

²⁹ *id.*, II.18.7f; *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 916; *Chr. Michael 1195*, x.25a, pp. 390-1.

³⁰ See pp. 158-9.

³¹ Ulf Björklund, *North to Another Country: The Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden* (1981); Heiga Anshütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom ʿTur ʿAbdin* (1984).

³² Until now it was necessary for non-specialists to follow P. Krüger, *Mönchtum*, a work rightly criticized by Abramowski (*Dionysius*, pp. 95 (n.1), 102 (n.1)), and P. Devos (in *Anal. Boll.* 56 (1938), pp. 185-6). What these critics did not remark on is the frequent inaccuracy with which Krüger cites both sources and literature, devaluing his work even as a mere collection of materials.

³³ ed. Aphrem Barsaum, Paris, 1920 = *Chr. Qartmin 819*.

Qartmin Trilogy, that is the *Lives* of the patronal saints of Qartmin.³⁴ These are complemented by the liturgical *Calendar of ʿTur ʿAbdin*³⁵ and the so-called *Book of Life*,³⁶ to which is added other hagiographical literature from the upper Tigris region. For the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries a greater range of sources is available, including letters, chronicles, inscriptions, ecclesiastical canons and documents, and the literature of the Byzantine and the later Arab rulers of the area. Saints' *Lives* again bring invaluable revelations about the texture of society and economic realities; even the absence of genuine hagiography after the mid-eighth century is informative. The List of Sources is classified according to the genre divisions most important for our purpose. Broadly speaking, the Syriac chronological material consists of laconic annals (Nos 2, 9, 10, 11) and more discursive histories. The reader is referred to S.P. Brock's survey of these in the *Journal of the Iraqi Academy (Syriac Corporation)* 5 (1979-80), pp. 1-32 (326-295) and to the work of W. Witkowski, cited at the end of the Preface. There is no satisfactory survey of Syriac hagiography as such; certain specimens can be classified as legends and are marked as such in the list of Sources.

The analysis and evaluation of the majority of the sources will be treated in the course of the narrative, since their relevance is usually restricted in time and so forms part of the historical discourse. The Index locorum will enable the reader to track these down.

Here I shall deal with the Qartminite sources, analysing in turn the *Chronicle of 819* and the *Qartmin Trilogy*, then adding a few words on the *Calendar of ʿTur ʿAbdin* and the *Book of Life*. The inscriptions are discussed individually and collectively in the Appendix.

a. The *Chronicle of 819*

This chronicle was probably written at Qartmin not long after 818/19, the last date which is mentioned in it. It has a greater concentration of information about the abbey than any other chronicle, and contains several notices that are unique. Its relationship with the *Qartmin Trilogy* is complicated: it seems that the author of the chronicle knew an early version of the three saints' *Lives*, differing somewhat from our text. Conversely, the later compiler to whom we owe this version inserted into it some notices from the chronicle, omitting those which disagreed with his developed form of the legend.

It was in 1911 that Afrem Baršawm, who was later to become the patriarch of Antioch, unearthed in the village of Beth Svirina in ʿTur ʿAbdin a bulky codex containing canons, patriarchal letters and a short, self-contained collection of historical notices spanning the years between the conception of Christ and the year 818/19, when Denis I

³⁴ These have been available until now only in the incomplete and erratic transcription of F. Nau, *Actes XI^e congr. orient.*, II (Paris, 1907), pp. 38-111, and in Sachau's summary (*MSS Berlin*, pp. 577-90) of the *Berlin Paraphrase*; my critical edition is appended on microfiche to this book.

³⁵ ed. P. Peeters, Brussels, 1908 = *Cal. TA*.

³⁶ This is still unedited, though a copy of one manuscript is appended on microfiche to this book; see also extracts in Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 91-6.

of Tell-Mahre, the historian, was consecrated patriarch of Antioch (August, 818, is the correct date). This manuscript was written by one Severus for his uncle David, bishop of Harran.³⁷ Now we read in the patriarchal Register of ordinations that a certain David, a monk of Qartmin abbey, was consecrated bishop for Harran by John III, who was patriarch from 846 to 873.³⁸ If these Davids may be identified, the manuscript belongs to the ninth century. A marginal addition shows that it was in Beth Svirina in 1095,³⁹ and it had presumably stayed there ever since.

The chief source for the earlier part of the chronicle contained in this codex was the *Chronicle of Edessa*, which ended in 540. Only a dozen of the 74 items before this date are not traceable to that compilation. On the other hand, only 58 out of 106 entries from the *Chronicle of Edessa* are included, and it is unclear for what reason the other 48 items were rejected.

Our chronicler shortens many of the notices, omitting or corrupting several dates; he calls Ibas a heretic, while the Edessene writer has a word of praise for him;⁴⁰ an earthquake is conveniently brought forward one year and becomes the cause of the death, in Antioch, of Asclepius, a bishop of Edessa 'who persecuted the eastern monks and all who did not accept the council of Chalcedon'.⁴¹ In his comment on this council, our writer shows his colours: 'the reason for the council was said to be the acceptance of Eutyches by Dioscorus. In actual fact, however, it was to reaffirm the teaching of Nestorius, attributing two natures to Christ.'⁴²

The rest of his material cannot so easily be traced. Edessa is named only seven more times, but one of these notices seems to show that its author wrote in that city: in the earthquake of 679 (AG 990), 'on Easter Sunday at the third hour, one side of the ancient church in Edessa collapsed'. To this (hypothetical) Edessene source we may attribute the other notices on Edessa and perhaps also the notices concerning the patriarchs of Antioch (our writer is careful to mention all Severus' successors) and other distinguished Syrians. The author of it may have been Jacob (d. 708), whose chronicle (only a few fragments of which have survived) was copied for the library of Qartmin in the early eighth century, according to the *Life of Simeon of the Olives*.⁴³ The short biography of Jacob Baradaeus goes back to John of Ephesus.⁴⁴ It may be that the mistake our chronicler makes in putting the Persian sack of Qartmin one year too early was due to his reliance at that point on a chronological calculation from one of the similarly misplaced dates in John of Ephesus (see the note on Chronology). The unseemly ecclesiastical machinations which followed the death of the patriarch Iwannis in 755 were the subject of an anecdotal history written in Tur 'Abdin by Daniel, the son of Moses (see Chapter 5, section 4), but, if this was known to our author, he did not follow its bias against certain bishops whose monastic allegiance was to Qartmin.⁴⁵

It seems that he also had before him a brief, continuous account of the Arab caliphs

³⁷ CSCO 81 (1920), pp. 24-23.

³⁸ *Chr. Michael 1195*, Register XIX.26, p. 756.

³⁹ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, p. 22; I found no trace of the MS in April 1984, during a visit to Tur 'Abdin (including Beth Svirina) and Damascus. ⁴⁰ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 746.

⁴¹ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 836, AG 831. ⁴² *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 762.

⁴³ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 240 [Dolabani, p. 153]; summary, p. 178.

⁴⁴ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 879. ⁴⁵ e.g. Athanasius Sandloyo and David of Dara.

to 'Abdullah al-Ma'mun; there is evidence that this was composed in the region subject to the governor of Jazira.⁴⁶

Finally, the names of fifteen distinguished monks of Qartmin Abbey occur, along with a number of items concerning that monastery. We may assume a separate source for these, one which had its origin in the abbey itself.

The details concerning Qartmin are certainly of the sort to suggest that the author was a monk at the abbey. On the other hand, we have to bear in mind the methods he exhibited in adapting the *Chronicle of Edessa*: a capricious selection of entries, which makes an argument from his silence more than usually weak, and a willingness to bend dates and facts for at least one cause, that of doctrinal chauvinism.

The *Chronicle of 846* derives all its entries concerning the abbey from that of 819, as Baršawm, the editor of the latter, noticed;⁴⁷ it cannot therefore be considered an independent witness. It does not include all the Qartmin notices, which might mean that the author was not himself, as Brooks had latterly thought,⁴⁸ a Qartminite; on the other hand it might simply mean that the author of the *Chronicle of 846*, although a monk of Qartmin himself, did not consider all the notices suitable for inclusion in a chronicle whose canvas covered a much wider area than that of 819.⁴⁹

There is no mention in the *Chronicle of 846* of the Kurdish raid of c.829, which is recorded by Gregory Barhebraeus;⁵⁰ since the Kurds were surprised by the Arab general in the act of pillaging the abbey and were routed in a dramatic manner just outside, I regard it as well-nigh impossible that any monk of Qartmin, however laconic his style, should forbear to mention it. Brooks noticed that the name of Harran abounded in this chronicle and was once inclined to attribute it to a native of that city.⁵¹ Now a certain Nonnus of Harran, a monk of Qartmin, was ordained for the see of Tur 'Abdin not long before the death of Denis of Tell-Mahre in 845 (he was 89th out of the 99 bishops ordained by that patriarch).⁵² When an inscription was erected at Qartmin in 1105, commemorating the predecessors of Bishop Basil Shamly, Nonnus was chosen to stand at the head of it with the date 848/9, although the order of the ninth- and early tenth-century bishops is confused and Nonnus' predecessor is actually placed after him.⁵³ It is possible that Nonnus was well known and dated, perhaps by the colophon of a book. If Nonnus was the last redactor of the *Chronicle of 846*,⁵⁴ this would explain the ambivalent evidence as to its origin: he was not there when the Kurds plundered the abbey; Qartmin was more important to him than to his contemporary, Denis of Tell-Mahre, yet less important to him than to the chronicler of 819; and, as an outsider, he could call David of Dara a wicked man, where his source had passed no judgement on him.

⁴⁶ H. Buk, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 14 (1905), p. 532: 'die Regierung Jazids III. und Ibrahims ist übergegangen, die nach Ps.-Dionysius [= *Chr. Zuqnin* 775] in Mesopotamien nicht anerkannt wurde'; moreover, apart from Theodotos of Germaniceia, only Mesopotamian bishops are mentioned.

⁴⁷ CSCO 81 (1920), pp. 24-23. ⁴⁸ CSCO 4, (1904), p. 121.

⁴⁹ It is no wonder, for instance, that he left out the skull-count of 443/4 (AG 755).

⁵⁰ *Chr. Gregory I*, p. 144.

⁵¹ E.W. Brooks, *ZDMG* 51 (1897), p. 570; reiterated by S.P. Brock in *Journal of the Iraqi Academy (Syriac corporation)* 5 (1979-80), p. 14. ⁵² *Chr. Michael 1195*, Register XVIII.89, p. 755. ⁵³ *INSCR.* B.13.

⁵⁴ E.W. Brooks, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 15 (1906), p. 578: the chronicle was originally brought to an end in 784/5 and only briefly added to thereafter; what de Halleux has to say about the origins of this chronicle in *Mus* 91 (1978), pp. 5-44, is not relevant here.

The following is an abstract of the entries concerning Tur 'Abdin in the *Chronicle of 819*; to each entry is appended a note saying where the *Chronicle of 846* has a lacuna or misses or abbreviates a parallel entry:

AG 708: Qartmin Abbey built by Samuel, the first abbot, and his disciple Simeon, to whom an angel showed the plan and measurements of the foundations. (Thus also in 846 with variant dating: 'One year and ten months before the consecration of John Chrysostom')

AG 755: Emptying of the tombs in Qartmin Abbey; 483 skulls found, together with the skull of Samuel, the first abbot. First to be buried after this was Mor John of Edessa. (Not in 846)

AG 795: Mor John Sa'oro, monk of Qartmin, ordained metropolitan of Amida; he built a large and splendid church of the Forty Martyrs and, outside the city, a bridge over the river Tigris. (Not in 846)

AG 889: Death of Jacob of Psiltho and John Sa'oro of Qartmin Abbey. (Lacuna in 846)

AG 891: Qartmin Abbey, Tella, Harran and Edessa burned in a Persian invasion. (Not in 846)

AG 916: Castle of Tur 'Abdin taken by the Persians. (Not in 846)

AG 926: Daniel 'Uzoyo,'⁵⁵ abbot of Qartmin, consecrated metropolitan of the amalgamated dioceses of Tella, Mardin, Dara and Tur 'Abdin. (Lacuna in 846)

AG 945: [Death] of Daniel; succeeded by Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan, who raised a man from the dead and performed many other wonders. (Lacuna in 846)

AG 9...?: (lacuna; cf. Chapter 2, n. 56) and in the following year, in the days of Gabriel, bishop of Dara and abbot of Qartmin, the tombs were emptied and eighty-two (marginal note: 'eight hundred [and two?]) skulls were found. (Lacuna in 846)

AG 1011: Simeon from Qartmin consecrated bishop of Harran. (Not in 846)

AG 1018: *Simeon of Harran built a church for the (Syrian) Orthodox in Nisibis*, all expenses being met by Qartmin Abbey. Three times by day the building was erected and three times by night Nestorians and Jews pulled it down again. But eventually it was finished and *consecrated by the patriarch Julian*. (846 has only those parts in italics)

AG 1030: Athanasius of Nunib elected abbot of Qartmin. (In 846 also) In AG 1055 he was consecrated bishop of Tur 'Abdin and in AG 1058 he died. (Not in 846)

AG 1045: *Death of Simeon of Harran on Thurs. 3 June; succeeded by his disciple, Thomas*, also from Qartmin Abbey. (The part in italics is in 846, but for 'Thomas' is substituted 'Simeon')

AG 1049: Death of Thomas of Harran. (In 846 also)

AG 1066: Death of Patriarch Iwannis. Synod at Rish'ayno was told by the caliph to elect Isaac of Harran, a monk of Qartmin, as his successor. (In 846 also)

⁵⁵ The name 'Uzoyo/'Uzoyo is probably derived from a village called Beth 'Uzza (cf. Pognon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 44-5), named after the Arab goddess al-'Uzza (J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, pp. 34f; cf. *Chr. Amida* 569, viii. 5, p. 78, line 3); such a village would not have been in Tur 'Abdin, but was perhaps in the neighbouring part of Persian territory, Beth 'Arabo, where Aḥudhemeh (d. 575) had recently converted the chief Arab tribes of Mesopotamia (PO 3 [1900], pp. 7-51). Fiey does not mention such a place in his works on the topography of this area.

AG 1067: Death of Isaac at 'Aqla at the hands of the caliph. Succeeded by Athanasius Sandloyo of Qartmin Abbey. (In 846 also)

AG 1069: Denis, monk of Qartmin, consecrated bishop of Harran. Death of Athanasius in Harran on 11 July. (846 has 'June') They took him and buried him in the monastery he built above Tell-Beshmay. (In 846 also)

AG 1073: Caliph 'Abdullah forced a synod of bishops in Baghdad to consecrate as patriarch David of Dara, a monk of Qartmin. Death of Denis of Harran in Baghdad. (In 846 also, where, however, David is called 'wicked')

AG 1080: Death of David of Dara, who was consecrated under the compulsion of the caliph. (In 846 also, which again calls him 'the wicked')

The *Chronicle of 819* is clearly of Qartminite authorship:

- 15 out of 125 entries mention Qartmin. No other monastery is treated in such detail; and why should outsiders be interested in the tombs?
- In an entry for AG 1047, those bishops present at the synod who came from Qartmin are singled out for mention.
- The schismatics Isaac, Athanasius and David are spoken of without blame. (Contrast 846: 'the wicked David'.) These three men were from Qartmin Abbey.

Having established so much, should we go further and accept the authority of Dolabani, when he says that 'Maṣṣur, the son of the priest Marzuq of Beth Svirina', abbot of Qartmin and a renowned scribe, wrote the chronicle?⁵⁶ He does not give his source, although an abbot named 'Maṣṣur of Beth Svirina' is mentioned in the *Book of Life*.⁵⁷ Writing in 1959, it is just possible that he had come across a source unknown to Barṣawm, who died in 1957, having sent the second edition of his *History of Syriac Literature* to the press the year before without emending his entry on the 'anonymous' writer of the chronicle which he discovered;⁵⁸ but, on the whole, it seems unlikely. Dolabani elsewhere shows himself capable of representing a conjectural identification as the plain truth.⁵⁹

b. The *Qartmin Trilogy*

This text survives in a manuscript in London, the lacunae of which are for the most part filled by two other manuscripts, both derived from the London manuscript through a lost intermediary. Other surviving manuscripts, as far as I have been able to ascertain, contain only paraphrases, of which the archetype seems to be a version in Berlin; the '*Berlin Paraphrase*' is apparently a Syriac translation from an Arabic version.

Unfortunately the London manuscript, the fountain-head of this tradition, has lost its colophon. The script of the latter half is of about the thirteenth century, but the first half of the manuscript is older. It is written in an archaic form of the Plain Script. These letter forms were extraordinarily stable between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries,

⁵⁶ Dolabani, *History of Qartmin* (1959), p. 166. ⁵⁷ *Book of Life*, p. 27. ⁵⁸ Barṣawm, *KBB*, p. 425.

⁵⁹ e.g. Dolabani, *History of Qartmin* (1959), p. 123; cf. Ch. 5, n. 102, below.

but I should be inclined to place our manuscript not long after 1000. By about the thirteenth century the second half of the text needed to be replaced. It was written on a type of cotton-paper which was in use from about the tenth century onwards in Mesopotamia; though strong, this paper was of course subject to rapid corrosion in unfavourable conditions. Probably it was left lying on a damp surface.

There are a number of scribal errors in the London manuscript which can only be explained if the autograph of the *Trilogy* was considerably older than this copy; probably it was only known through an intermediary. We cannot, however, go back beyond the ninth century, because of the evidence that the *Trilogy* postdated the *Chronicle of 819*. It seems very likely that the *Trilogy* influenced the composition of the *Legend of Aaron of Serugh*, which can be dated to the late tenth century. Perhaps we can do no better than to place its definitive composition between 819 and c.969.⁶⁰

At the end of the third part of the *Trilogy*, which survives only in the later hand, we can detect an interpolation which had been unknown to another monk of Qartmin, who summarized the *Life of Gabriel* for liturgical purposes some time in the thirteenth century (see p. 160).

The contents of the *Trilogy* are the *Lives* of Samuel and Simeon, the founders of Qartmin Abbey (the latter died in 433), and the *Life* of Gabriel (d. 648), who was abbot of Qartmin and bishop of Tur 'Abdin at the momentous time of the Arab Conquest. The interval is bridged by a narrative containing an account of a battle between the monks and the nearby village of Qartmin over the relics of Simeon, a record of the building of a conventual church in the abbey under Anastasius (d. 518) and a quantity of extraneous material.

It is instructive to contrast the *Qartmin Trilogy* with two related hagiographical compositions, the *Life of Malke* and the above-mentioned *Life of Aaron*; whereas these are smooth, fictional narratives, woven, as it were, of a single piece, the *Trilogy* is a patchwork of old and new, tradition and fantasy, historical records and blatant plagiarisms. The fascinating process by which these disparate materials may be unsewn and sorted for use by the historian will occupy several scattered pages in the body of my book; the early history of Qartmin is little more than an extended commentary on this text and on the *Chronicle of 819*, so it seems natural to treat textual problems at the point where they have most relevance to the narrative.

Instead of a detailed analysis, therefore, I give here an analysis in tabular form. The Index locorum will enable the reader to find where each section is evaluated. By the use of italics for secondary, extraneous or imaginative material the skeleton of historically useful texts is visually exposed. Where they are known, the sources are briefly noted here for ease of reference. (*Chr. JE* = *Chr. John Eph.* 585; *Chr. 819* = *Chr. Qartmin 819*; *Chr. E* = *Chr. Edessa* 540; *Chr. Z* = *Chr. Zuqnin* 775; *LL. E. Sts.* = *LL. Eastern Saints*; Q = unknown source containing a number of building records; > = deriving from; **Cal. TA* = an ancestor of *Cal. TA*.)

⁶⁰ The latter being the earliest date for *Leg. Aaron*, as I argue in *OC* 70 (1986), pp. 61-3.

Analysis of the *Qartmin Trilogy* (by section)

LIFE OF SAMUEL

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Introduction</i> | (in the style of John of Ephesus) |
| 2 | Persian sack of Qartmin | > <i>Chr. JE</i> , vi.5-9 + tradition |
| 3 | Birth of Samuel | |
| 4 | Early asceticism | |
| 5 | Sojourn at Mor Abay | |
| | <i>Martyrdom of Karpos</i> | > <i>Cal. TA</i> , 3 Dec.; <i>Chr. JE</i> , vi.6 |
| 6 | Arrival at Qartmin | |
| | <i>Encounter with the boy Simeon</i> | cf. <i>Leg. Malke</i> |
| 7 | <i>Simeon's dream</i> | |
| 8 | The boy becomes a disciple | |
| 9 | <i>Girls trouble him at the spring</i> | |
| | The monks find a remote place | |
| 10 | An angel shows Simeon a better place | |
| 11 | The founders build an oratory | |
| | <i>Date of the foundation</i> | |
| 12 | Catalogue of holy Qartminites | > local liturgical panegyric |
| 13 | <i>Improving discourse</i> | |
| 14 | The monks build their monastery | > Q |
| 15 | Benefaction of Arcadius and Honorius | > Q |
| 16 | <i>Exorcism of Arcadius' daughter</i> | cf. <i>Leg. Malke</i> |
| 17 | Plague in Hah | > Q? |
| 18 | Benefaction of Theodosius II | > Q |
| 19 | <i>Death of Samuel</i> | > * <i>Cal. TA</i> , 15 May |

LIFE OF SIMEON

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1-5 | <i>Hagiographica</i> | |
| 6 | Three miracles | |
| 7 | Plague in Tur 'Abdin | |
| 8 | <i>Simeon visited by his Angel</i> | |
| 9 | His effect on the Persians | |
| 10 | <i>Visit of Rabbula</i> | > <i>Chr. 819</i> = <i>Chr. E</i> , AG 723 |
| 11 | Simeon's solitary walks | |
| | <i>Destruction of a heretic</i> | |
| 12 | <i>Simeon's virtues</i> | |
| 13 | <i>Death of Simeon</i> | > <i>Cal. TA</i> , 19 Jan.; <i>Chr. E</i> , AG 744 |
| 14 | <i>Battle with Qartmin village</i> | > * <i>Cal. TA</i> , 6 Oct. |
| | <i>Presence of Dioscorus</i> | > <i>Chr. 819</i> , AG 756 |
| 15 | <i>Clearing-out of the sepulchres</i> | * <i>Cal. TA</i> , 6 Oct. (<i>lege</i> 7 Oct.); <i>Chr. 819</i> , AG 756 |

LIFE OF GABRIEL

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Panegyric of monks | > LL. E. Sts., Ch. 35 |
| 2 Benefaction of Anastasius | > Q |
| 3 Change of emperors | } > LL. E. Sts., Ch. 35 |
| 4 Descent of Ephrem on the East | |
| 5 Persian sack of Qartmin | > Chr. 819, AG 891 |
| 6 Proemium | } > LL. E. Sts., Ch. 36 |
| 7 Youth of Gabriel | |
| 8 Early asceticism | |
| 9 Arrival at Qartmin | |
| 10 John the Arab | > Chr. Z, pp. 160-3 |
| 11 Gabriel made bishop | |
| 12 His treaty with the Arabs | |
| 13 His strict rule . . . | |
| 14 . . . in the refectory | |
| 15 The poor at the gate | > LL. E. Sts., Ch. 35 |
| Raising the dead at . . . | |
| 16 . . . the Monastery of the Cross | |
| 17 . . . the village of Sighun | > Gabriel's disciple, Theodore |
| 18 . . . the village of Olin | |
| 19 Quarrying the great slab | > INSCR. A.6. |
| 20 A monk under interdiction | > LL. E. Sts., Ch. 18 |
| 21 Gabriel's virtues | |
| 22 Death of Gabriel | |
| His funeral and the date of his death | |
| 23 The course of his life, in summary | |
| 24 Crushed boy revived | |
| 25 Simeon of the Olives | > { *Cal. TA, 3 Jun.; Chr. 819, AG 1011, Chr. 846, AG 1018; *L. Simeon of the Olives? |
| 26 Author's note | |
| 27 Exhumation of Gabriel | |
| 28 Detaching of his right hand | |

It seems that the *Life of Samuel* was originally a mere foundation legend, in which tradition had preserved a few personalia about the founders. The legend focussed on the angel who led Simeon to the site of the abbey and helped him to measure it out; and that is how it was summarized in the *Chronicle of 819* (AG 708). This seems to be a kind of memory of the fact that the original settlement was on another site not far away (see Chapter 2, *ad init.*); the process by which the community moved over to the present site has been telescoped into a single night. This legend took shape in the second half of the fifth century and was written down at that time (see p. 39).

The building records, including section 2 of the *Life of Gabriel* and, perhaps, section 17 of the *Life of Samuel*, led a separate existence (=Q) until the compilation of the *Trilogy*; they may have been written in the original *Book of Life*. Whoever wrote the *Chronicle of 819* failed to consult this book; his silence is outweighed by the evidence.

The *Life of Simeon* was a separate composition. It should be compared with the (much longer) *Life of Baršawmo*, which is little more than a list of his miracles and his virtues, although it preserves elements of authentic tradition recognizable on internal criteria. Such elements are to be found in sections 6 to 9 and, perhaps, in section 11 of the *Life of Simeon*. Section 13 owes something to the *Chronicle of Edessa*, which was not apparently used elsewhere by the compiler of the *Trilogy*. Probably, the *Life of Simeon* was composed in the same period as the *Life of Baršawmo*, that is, 550-650,⁶¹ in a different and very terse style. All the later compiler did was to expand and embroider it.

The *Life of Gabriel* had no previous existence as a full hagiography; the reliable part can be isolated with virtual certainty at the very end: a record of his funeral and a summary of his life. Something about the way section 12 is phrased suggests that it is a corrupt version of a genuine tradition, but so corrupt that it can tell us nothing new. Sections 13, 14 and 17 surely belonged to the oral tradition, as did sections 24, 27 and 28. These last two seem so fresh that they might have been written down within the lifetime of some who had seen Gabriel's exhumation in the early 770s. The *Chronicle of 819* says that Gabriel raised a person from the dead, whereas the *Life of Gabriel* speaks of three resurrections. This shows that it did not reach its definitive form until after 819.

We can now reconstruct the state of the sources at the moment when the compiler of the *Trilogy* (the author of sections 1 and 13 of the *Life of Samuel* and section 26 of the *Life of Gabriel*) set himself the task of making something like a continuous and satisfactory narrative out of them.

He followed a convention known to us also from the *Life of Aho*, by which an extract from the history of the wars between Rome and Persia (no matter whether it is accurate or suitable to the context) is used and adapted to introduce the hagiographical subject. He had at his elbow the *Church History* and the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* by John of Ephesus, the *Chronicle of 819* and the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*; he also used the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* on one occasion and made one of the eighth-century inscriptions at Qartmin the basis of another flight of fancy. He was ingenious enough to invent a connection between Samuel and the martyr-bishop Karpos of Sawro, whose commemoration he found in the *Calendar*, and to bring both of them to the region of Nisibis in order to work in an 'historical context' for the martyrdom (see p. 22).

The compiler of the *Qartmin Trilogy* shows considerable narrative skills, particularly in sections 6, 7, 9 and 16 of the *Life of Samuel* and in sections 5, 11 and 14 of the *Life of Simeon*, skills which appear to derive from the same milieu as the *Life of Malke*. The *Life of Malke* was written in Tur 'Abdin, probably in the ninth or tenth century, to judge by the history of the Awgin Cycle and Malke's high rank in that tradition. It shows unusual interest in human emotions and senses, particularly the sense of smell, which it exploits with pathos. Something of these qualities can be found in the passages cited from our text.

Is it perhaps significant that they are absent from the *Life of Gabriel*? Perhaps we should postulate two processes of compilation, the first integrating the *Lives of Samuel and Simeon*, the second combining these with that of Gabriel. What seems beyond doubt, however, is that the text we have before us is the product of several reworkings, during each of which interpolations were made.

⁶¹ Honigsmann, *Baršawma*, p. 16.

Some readers may wish to read the text or the translation of the *Qartmin Trilogy* with a commentary at hand; the Index locorum enables the book to be thus adapted.

c. *The Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*

The stability of a local liturgical tradition is generally recognized. Peeters is certainly right to identify the text he edited as the earliest surviving representative of the liturgical tradition of Tur 'Abdin and, in particular, of Qartmin Abbey; but it must be borne in mind that we have only the late redaction of Rabban Šlivo of Hah, which is to be dated c. 1300, so that there are likely to be errors of scribal transmission.

d. *The Book of Life*

Originally stored at Qartmin, where it accumulated over an untold number of years valuable notices concerning benefactions to the monastery (especially lists of the names of benefactors, but occasionally also jottings of a commemorative nature), the so-called *Book of Life*, which might be called a *Book of Suggestions* to the Recording Angel, later became the property of Beth Svirina, events concerning which village dominate its later pages. By that stage it had abandoned the chronological vagueness originally thought appropriate to a record of 'eternal merits' and had begun to accept dated records of memorable events. The earliest such dated record that has survived is of the eleventh century; the latest is of the year 1853.⁹² The events recorded are local in character and the narrative is invariably that of an eye-witness. The manuscript of the *Book of Life* had a turbulent history (cf. pp. 224–25). Parts of it were published by Barsawm from a manuscript belonging to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in his *Monograph on Tur 'Abdin*, pp. 91–6, 165–6.⁹³ For the unpublished parts, I have used the extracts copied for me from a manuscript at Qartmin by Malfono Isa Gülsen. This is how he introduces these extracts:

From a volume containing the *Book of Life*
of the Abbey of Qartmin:

As we saw in the exemplar which Mor Iwanis Afrem Bilig brought from the Patriarchate in Hom, the codex from which he copied this one which is in my hands contains seventy-four pages [and] is [now] in Damascus. There is no date on the older codex, and the beginning of it has perished.

After the last extract ('p. 102: Rabban Sovo, abbot of Qartmin'), Gülsen writes:

This is the author of the volume of the *Book of Life* from which I have copied the above, which was itself copied by George, the son of Shabo of Klarza, priest of Morboho, for Iwanis Afrem of Tur 'Abdin in 1959. The scribe of the older codex, which is today in the Patriarchate, was Addai, as is seen at the end of the book.

There is a contradiction here. A note by the scribe George, of which I have a photograph, explains that Bishop Iwanis saw 'this *Book of Life* according to an

⁹² With the exception of some very recent entries; cf. Ch. 4, n. 117.

⁹³ Barsawm (174, pp. 11–12) saw another such *Book of Life*, belonging to the Monastery of the Cross, in Zaz before the First World War.

exemplar of Beth Svirina' (the full title seems to have been *The Book of Life of Beth Svirina and of the Abbey of Qartmin*) at the patriarchate in 1957, on the occasion of a patriarchal election, and copied it. George says also that the bishop found no date in the old codex. He goes on to relate how he saw the bishop's copy and asked permission to make another for him, 'lest it should perish'. The reason for this, as Gülsen explained to me later, is that the bishop's copy was in pencil; it was probably destroyed after transcription. Certainly, this text should be edited from the Damascus manuscript; but the present patriarch has twice made a search for it on my behalf in vain. Perhaps it is still in Hom.

I have always found the *Book of Life* reliable and sometimes useful, even when entries are undated, as in the cases of Abel the Stylite and of Bishop Daniel (pp. 205, 269). After all, it was written for the eye of God and not for some purpose of worldly partisanship. But the composition in the form known to me has no recognizable structure; each entry must be considered separately. Much has certainly been lost, so that no argument from its silence would be valid.

Samuel of Eshthin: The hard core of a legend

Eshthin? We do not know of such a place. Perhaps you mean Meshitiné. That is less than an hour from here on the way to Midyat.¹ Thus the elders of Qeleth answered my enquiry about Samuel's birthplace. It seems that the patriarch Barsawm, who must have known the regions of Mardin and Sawro even better than these villagers, agreed with them, for he re-names the Founder of the abbey of Qartmin as 'Samuel of Meshitin'.² Wiesner reports seeing reused material from a former church in the village of Meshitin, but he does not say where it is;³ and neither Meshitin(-é) nor Eshthin is marked on any map. The former name is not found in history. As for Eshthin, the only reference to it is at the beginning of the *Life of Samuel* (*Qartmin Trilogy*) vi.8-9):

Samuel was from the district of Sawro, from a village called Eshthin, which is, moreover, in the vicinity of Mardin.

This is not totally inapplicable to Meshitiné, although it does create the expectation that Eshthin will be found, not some 15 km east of Sawro, but on the Mardin side of the town, that is, to the south, where the natural boundary of the region is marked by the Hop Pass (1,115 m), 13 km from Mardin and 25 km from Sawro. A Turkish map marks ŞARTI not far north of the Hop Pass, with DERDÜK and DERBARAP in its vicinity. If this ŞARTI is Eshthin, one of these latter may be the monastery (Arabic: *dér*) which Samuel was said to have founded 'three miles' from his village (vii.17f).

The identity of Samuel's village may be uncertain, but it is plain that it was a place of the utmost insignificance, which has left no other trace in history. It therefore seems unlikely that we owe this detail to the imagination of Samuel's hagiographer; it is rather the first indication that the hagiographer was adapting an authentic tradition. This tradition itself will have been preserved orally for some time, perhaps until the latter part of the fifth century, when the foundation legend was probably written down (see p. 39).

If we take the first part of the *Life*, before the foundation of the abbey of Qartmin, it is clear that the hagiographer has introduced considerable changes and embellishments to what may have been a meagre set of data. The prelude to Samuel's birth (vi.10-vii.5),

¹ Barsawm, *TA*, pp. 19, 37; cf. p. 30. ² Wiesner, *Kalibauten*, I, p. 7 n. 27.

his childhood (vii.8-17), the dream of the sick child Simeon and his recovery (x.1-xv.10), the disturbing episode at the spring (xv.11-xvi.18)—these passages are the work of an imaginative writer. The introduction of an episode from sixth-century history (viii.13-18 = *Chr. John Eph.* 385, vi.6) concerning a Persian invasion under Adarnahan is probably due to the same hand.

When these are abstracted we are left with the following details. Samuel was born at Eshthin to a man called John, who was relatively prosperous. He and his younger brother Shomir built a monastery three miles from their village to which Samuel attracted eight brothers. Later, he left by stealth and found a deserted mountain-top called 'Amrin somewhere to the north-east of Nisibis, but after three years he was found out by like-minded men who held him in honour. Seven years later, when their numbers had risen to 30, Samuel was ordained priest by the bishop of Sawro, Karpas. Shortly after this, Karpas was killed by the Persians during a raid and the monastery was burned down. Samuel retrieved his master's body and rebuilt the monastery, which was not called after his name, but after Mor Abay. Then he took a relic of Karpas and left the monastery, on the understanding that he would return. He went eastwards into the mountain for one day, thus leaving the Persian borderlands, and came to Qartmin, where he settled by the spring to the north of the village. His first disciple here was Simeon, the son of Shivo of Qartmin, whom his father had vowed to Samuel after the boy had recovered from a mortal illness through his prayers, the miracle being attributed by Samuel to the martyr Karpas. Shivo, who was, like Samuel's father, a relatively wealthy man, built a church in Karpas' name and instituted a feast on the anniversary of his death (3 December).

There is no way of telling exactly how much of this belongs to the authentic tradition. But a certain amount of it comes under suspicion because of the way it ties in with the interpolated historical extract about the Persian raid. Given that he decided to bring Karpas together with Adarnahan at Nisibis, is it not likely that the hagiographer is also responsible for situating Mt 'Amrin there and giving it (absurdly) a Persian etymology (viii.2)?³ To accept this would be to write off also the historical relevance of the statement that, in coming from Mt 'Amrin to Qartmin, Samuel moved away from the edge of Persian territory.

That the name 'Amrin came from the tradition is shown by the hagiographer's need to explain it. (The name is not otherwise heard of and so is unlikely to have been interpolated.) Also in the tradition was the statement that Samuel lived in 'the monastery of Mor Abay', for this, too, needed to be explained. The hagiographer is worried because it was not called after Samuel and tries to make out that 'Abay' means 'my father', that is, Samuel, as addressed by his disciples (viii.5-8). While rejecting the aetiological etymology, we must seek another explanation for this detail of the tradition. There is a well-known monastery of Mor Abay on the lower slopes of Mt Qoros, just north of Qeleth in the region of Sawro.⁴ This was founded between the mid-fourth

³ The name 'Amrin (also 'Are) belongs to a village on the escarpment north-east of Nisibis; the similarity with 'Amrin may have suggested this position. 'Amrin is clearly a Semitic name.

⁴ Krüger, *Mönchstum*, II, pp. 6-8 and, in addition to the references there, Wright, *MSS Cambridge*, pp. 979-85; Barsawm, *KAB*, p. 630; Wiesner, *Kalibauten*, I, pp. 58-66 (with photographs and plan of church); Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur Abdin* (1984), pp. 85-8.

century (when Abay, alias Mihrshabühr, was put to death by his Persian father Adurabrozgird) and the late seventh century, when Theodotos of Amida dwelt there.⁵ It may be the 'monastery of Mor Abay' persecuted by the Chalcedonians in 521, according to the Chronicle of Michael.⁶ If the tradition associated Samuel with a 'monastery of Mor Abay', it is preferable to take this to mean the one near Qeleth, since otherwise we should have to postulate an unknown monastery.⁷ Besides, Qeleth is in the region of Şawro, where Samuel was born.

The connection between Karpos of Şawro and Samuel is suspect. There must have been a church dedicated to Karpos at Qartmin village, since our author was surely obliged in such matters to work within a local tradition.⁸ But if nothing was known of Karpos beyond what is recorded in the liturgical *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*, namely that he was bishop of Şawro and was martyred on 3 December, the tradition that he was Samuel's master might have been invented on the basis of their common origin and the existence of a church dedicated to Karpos at Qartmin.

Honigmann thinks it improbable that a bishop of Şawro can have been put to death by the Persians, because Şawro was demonstrably within the Roman empire.⁹ The *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin* does not actually say he was killed by the Persians and the Persian context provided in the *Life* is adulterated. Karpos may have met his death at other hands. But the implication of Constantius' fortification of Tur 'Abdin is that Persian forays against Amida could be expected not only from the south, by way of the plain which Tella commanded and the pass between the limestone massif and the basalt mountain of Ayshumo, but also from the east. It is not improbable that a raiding party should have entered the area over which the bishop of Şawro presided; indeed, Şawro itself lay on one of the obvious strategic approaches to Amida. This is the route described by Assurnasirpal II, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this book, where Şawro appears with its ancient name, Sura (Shura).

In the sixth century of the Christian Era, as in the ninth century BC, Şawro was an important fortress. It is named by Procopius as one of several castles between Dara and Amida.¹⁰ Another of these castles was Banasymeon, a name which seems very likely to represent the original reading of the *Notitia Antiochena*, where it gives the third of the three bishoprics under Dara as 'Mnasoubion, or *tou Banasymeon'.¹¹ The first two bishoprics have been identified as Rish'ayno and Tur 'Abdin. They account for the areas to the south-west and north-east of Dara; the south-east was Persian territory. There remains the north-west, the region between Dara and Amida, and that is indeed where Procopius seems to place Banasymeon. Probably this name was attached to one of the late Roman sites which dominates the valley of Şawro.¹²

⁵ Peeters' notes on *Cal. TA*, Oct. 1:3; Nov. 1:1; Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, p. 814; *L. Theodotos*, foll. 63a.3, b.1-3; 66b.3; 67a.3; Baršawm, *KBB*, p. 394; Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (1880), p. 3.

⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, ix. 14b, p. 267; the passage is based on *Chr. Amida* 569, VIII.5, but the name is not in Brooks' text, although it appears in both his translations (ET, p. 211; LT, p. 56).

⁷ The Abay whose pen-portrait appears in *LL. Eastern Saints*, Ch. 14, is the only other bearer of this name who obtained fame among the West-Syrians; but no monastery was named after him. The monastery at Beth Man'em is called after Mor Abhay, not Mor Abay (pace Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, II, pp. 32f); cf. *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 241.

⁸ cf. *INSCR. C.13*. ⁹ Honigmann, *Baršawm*, p. 101.

¹⁰ Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.14; cf. George of Cyprus, p. 46, v. 919; *Notit. Dign.*, p. 75.

¹¹ E. Honigmann, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), p. 84.

¹² Possibly Hisarkaya (Kale Bozresha), on which see Wiessner, *Ruinenstätten*, pp. 7f; the valley of Şawro is

In 570, therefore, there was a Chalcedonian bishopric not far from Şawro. Now, ever since the wrongful deposition of anti-Chalcedonian bishops at the start of the sixth-century persecutions, successors-in-exile had been appointed to their sees whenever possible, by way of disputing the legitimacy of bishops resident. This policy developed under Jacob Baradaeus into an effort to construct a complete shadow hierarchy.¹³ If the Syrian Orthodox rival of the bishop of Banasymeon resided near Şawro he may well have been called bishop of the latter. The creation of this bishopric probably followed the elevation of Dara to metropolitan status. It did not last long. The Chalcedonian bishop disappeared either in 573, with the fall of Dara to the Persians, or, more likely, in 613, at the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia (cf. pp. 149-50). The Syrian Orthodox bishop disappeared before 698, when Theodotos died at Qeleth, for he is not listed among the prelates 'in whose country he died and who honoured his commemoration'.¹⁴ Jacob of Şawro, the only other bishop attested for this see, was alive in 648 (LXXXVII.18; cf. pp. 156-57). Probably the eclipse of Şawro was due both to the disappearance of the Chalcedonian rival and to the removal of the frontier, which robbed the fortress of its importance.

The existence in Şawro of a mosque called after 'the martyr Karpos' (*Qrāfūs al-shahīd*)¹⁵ seems to imply a pre-Islamic date for the bishop; the dedication of the former church would hardly have been adopted by the Muslims otherwise.

These arguments give a *terminus ante quem* in the early seventh century. As for the *terminus post quem*, it can be fixed with considerable confidence at the death of Anastasius in 518. Before that date not only had Dara hardly become a metropolis, but also, the outstanding saints of Mesopotamia would have been included in the liturgical calendar of the Universal Church. The martyrology of 411, written in Edessa, contains no commemoration of Karpos among the confessor bishops, which certainly detaches him from Samuel.¹⁶ Once loosed from these fourth-century moorings there is no reason why he should not drift into the most probable context, namely the sixth century.

Syrian Orthodox bishops in that time frequently lived in monasteries and it may well be that the bishop of Şawro dwelt in the monastery of Mor Abay above Qeleth.¹⁷ According to the *Life of Theodotos*, this monastery was deserted in the Persian Wars.¹⁸ That event provides a plausible occasion for the martyrdom of Karpos; when did it occur? In the course of the Twenty Years' War the Persians entered the vicinity of Şawro. At some date before 587, they captured Beidoua (Fafi), to the west of Tur 'Abdin. This, or else the years 604-6, when the Persians captured the castle of Tur 'Abdin and other targets on the Tigris frontier, is the best context that can be found in the surviving sources.¹⁹

the most likely position, both because it was thickly populated (being fertile) and because of the place of Banasymeon in Procopius' list: it is relatively far down, i.e. near Amida, yet as a bishopric it came under Dara.

¹³ See the list in *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [502-4]; Honigmann, *Evêques*, pp. 142-206, 231-45.

¹⁴ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 68b.2. ¹⁵ I. Armalet, *al-Mashriq* 16 (1913), p. 572.

¹⁶ *Cal. Edessa* 411, pp. 11-23; Karpos is not among the bishop-martyrs of the Orient either, *ibid.*, p. 24, nor in *Cal. Syr.*

¹⁷ John bar Shayallah, bishop of Amida and Şawro late in the fifteenth century, seems to have taken the latter part of his title from the fact of his residence at Mor Abay, which he restored thoroughly: *L. John bar Shayallah*, foll. 83b-84a; see also Ch. 2, n. 11. ¹⁸ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 66b.3.

¹⁹ Theophylact, II.18.7f; Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 207 n. 2; *Chr. 'Guidi'* 7th cent., p. 22; *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 916; *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.25a, pp. 390-1 (on the latter occasion, according to Michael, the Persians 'harmed none but the Romans' in the vicinity of Hesno d-Kifo and Tur 'Abdin).

Honigmann went too far in dismissing all evidence of an episcopal title at Şawro before the late fifteenth century.²⁰ Both the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*, a trustworthy witness, and the *Life of Gabriel* were written down in their definitive form before that date. Why should they have invented these bishops, Karpos and Jacob, out of thin air? The name of the mosque at Şawro also points to an ancient tradition. I would suggest that the title was introduced after 566, when John of Ephesus listed the bishops created by Jacob Baradaeus,²¹ as a counterpart to the Chalcedonian title of Banasymeon. Karpos in all probability met his death at the hands of the Persians when they destroyed the monastery of Mor Abay, presumably in the 580s. The existence of a tradition to this general effect would make the legendary development of the *Life of Samuel* even more understandable.

There is some evidence that Şawro, which was, as we have seen, a very ancient settlement, had considerable standing in the lifetime of Samuel. The *Life of Daniel of Aghlosh* (d. 439) reports that the aristocratic family of his bride came from the 'village of Şawr/Şor' in the territory of Amida.²² This goes some way towards substantiating the picture of Şawro as an important centre in the fourth century. The Syriac word for village can apply to any town. Not every 'village' would have contained aristocratic families which formed alliances with other such families in Amida. An early monk of Qartmin was called Abraham bar Şawroye, which means he sprang from an aristocratic family of Şawro (xxi.18-19).²³

The parents of Samuel and of his disciple Simeon are described as wealthy and well-known men (vi.9-10; x.1-2), but we should understand this in relative terms. Compared to the other inhabitants of Eshtin and of Qartmin they were rich, but they are unlikely to have been known, say, to the parents of Daniel of Aghlosh, or even to his in-laws. Indeed, the very idea that they were rich may be a hagiographical convention, which, though it has a firm enough basis in the actual lives of many saints, was assumed without knowledge to apply also to Samuel and Simeon. In the same way Aaron of Serugh, whose *Life* is almost entirely fictional, was supposed to have been the son of rich parents in Kafro Rabo, near Serugh. They could not bear to think of him getting tanned by keeping company with shepherds!²⁴

The historical basis of this convention can be illustrated from the best-known and authenticated Syriac saints' *Lives* of the fifth-sixth centuries. The parents of Daniel of Aghlosh had enough influence with the military authorities at Amida to have a posse of four mounted soldiers despatched after their son, when he absconded with Mor Mari towards Edessa with the intention of becoming a monk.²⁵ The father of John of Tella (483-538) died when he was an infant, leaving enough money for a good Hellenic education and enough influence to get him a position in the *praetorium* of the duke at Rish'ayno. His mother tried to persuade him that it was possible to lead a life pleasing to God as a man of means.²⁶ In Edessa about the same time, Aphtonía, the widow of a *retor*, gave most of her sons the required education in rhetoric and law and found them

positions in the imperial service; but her youngest, another John, she placed in a monastery near Seleucia on the Orontes before his beard was grown.²⁷ Later in the sixth century, at Samosata, another widow distributed her husband's wealth among the poor, keeping enough to educate her two lame sons, Athanasius and Severus, until they were old enough to enter the monastery at Qenneshre, which was founded by the above-mentioned John, son of Aphtonía. Athanasius ended his life as patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox; Severus as bishop of Samosata.²⁸

The biographer of John bar Aphtonía makes explicit his literary purpose in beginning with John's illustrious origins: just as the book of Job speaks first of his noble birth and of his wealth, 'in order to show the greatness of his ordeal and to add lustre to his victory', so the mention of John's rich background will make his voluntary abdication sound more admirable.²⁹ This might well be taken as a programme for beginning a saint's *Life*, whether or not he was in fact well-born like John.

On the other hand, Christ and the Apostles, and, for instance, Simeon the Stylite offered a different model; their parents were not rich and whatever education they had had was, with few exceptions, very limited. Jesus was a carpenter, the Apostles tentmakers, cobblers and fishermen, Simeon a shepherd. This model finds an echo in the *Life of Barşawmo*.³⁰ But it is significantly less easy to add to this list than to the other.

One of the few Syriac *Lives* which deals with the family background of the saint in no more than two or three lines is that of Theodotos of Amida, who died in 698. He was born in an obscure village of Ingilene called 'Noth into a family called Beth Qeryono, 'the house of reading'.³¹ In the context of village life this would seem to designate a family which was known for the readers it had supplied to the village church. This implies a modicum of leisure, as does the fact that Theodotos, already as a boy, went visiting the monasteries in the region of Amida. Theodotos' Greek name may well have been adopted at the hellenized abbey of Qenneshre, but there is little trace in his reliable biography of Hellenic ideals. When he died he possessed only five books, which contrasts starkly with the bibliophilia of his contemporary, Jacob of Edessa, also a monk of Qenneshre.³²

While the bias of early accredited hagiography towards genuinely aristocratic urban families is clearly to be connected with the relative inarticulateness of those who lived outside this circle, the exception provided by the *Life of Theodotos* may nevertheless justify the generalization that most distinguished holy men came from families distinguished in the world. For it draws our attention to the one essential distinction between the peasant and his economic superiors, however parochial the fame of the latter may have been: the possession of leisure. Most villagers in Tur 'Abdin today can ill-afford to send their children to monasteries, because they need their help on the farm.

John of Ephesus tells us how his contemporary Simeon 'the Mountaineer' found a highland region around Abdher on the Euphrates where people lived in widely

²⁰ Honigmann, *Barşawma*, p. 101. ²¹ cf. n. 13. ²² *L. Daniel*, fol. 98a.2; summary, p. 60.

²³ cf. Athanasius bar Gumoye, *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.16b, p. 447, and (*ibid.*, xii.4b, p. 485) Denis' exposition of the relationship between his own family (Beth Tell-Mahroye) and two great families of Edessa, Beth Rusaphoye and Beth Gumoye. ²⁴ *Leg. Aaron*, pp. [295-6].

²⁵ *L. Daniel*, fol. 98b.3; summary, pp. 60-1. ²⁶ *L. John of Tella*, pp. 39, 42.

²⁷ *L. John bar Aphtonía*, sections 2-4. ²⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.24c, pp. 388-9.

²⁹ *L. John bar Aphtonía*, section 2. ³⁰ *L. Barşawmo*, fol. 72a.1. ³¹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 58a.1.

³² *L. Theodotos*, fol. 67b.1; *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.16c, pp. 448-9: when the monks of Tell 'Eda saw that Jacob was dying and would not embark on his intended journey to Edessa, they sent after his books, which had been dispatched in advance, and retrieved them for their library before they crossed the Euphrates.

scattered farmsteads of substantial dimensions up to ten miles from the village and pastured cattle and sheep on the mountainside.³³ (The sharp contrast with most other regions of Mesopotamia at that time, which we can infer from Simeon's astonishment, must mean that the region was so rugged and impassable that the highlanders had no problems of security; in Tur 'Abdin villages are tightly clustered on defensible hills and the only outlying buildings are empty bothies for travellers and merchants.) At last Simeon found a church in 'a kind of village' called M'arbone, but was bitterly disappointed to find it full of wood and stones and dust. Many of the inhabitants of this region, he learned, only went to church to baptize their children and had little knowledge of the Christian faith. He resolved to reform them and, having cleaned out the church, he summoned them all to it on a Sunday and said, 'Why have your sons not been made Sons of the Covenant and been instructed and placed in this church to make you hear God's Word?' They replied, 'Sir, they have not time to leave the goats and learn anything'. When the holy man resolved nonetheless to tonsure thirty of the ninety children and teach them, boys and girls together, in a school, he found that he had to overcome much opposition. This was surely because the parents begrudged their loss of shepherds and helpers. Yet he succeeded in establishing a first generation of Readers and Daughters of the Covenant, who in turn were teaching others at the time of his death.³⁴

Simeon the Stylite had developed a kind of natural religion while he kept the sheep and there will always have been those like him who came to monastic life from a working background. But the children whose parents could afford to let them sample that life at leisure gained thereby a natural advantage. In some ways, perhaps, the monastic elite, perversely enough, perpetuated the social *status quo*. Christ's Gospel of poverty had not succeeded in making the rich less respectable, but the taint of wealth was offset by a close association with monasteries and the residual guilt expiated through the 'sacrifice' of a child.

To return to our text: the mention of Samuel's younger brother, Shomir (vii.19), recommends itself both by the rarity of the name³⁵ and by the fact that this brother plays no further part in the story. A 'novelist' would hardly introduce a character only to let him disappear again. Even the Syriac *Life* of Simeon the Stylite, which is no work of fiction, pursues Simeon's brother Shemshay a little further.³⁶ As for the romantic *Legend of Malke*, it treats the saint's sister, Shufnay, with an emotional sympathy surprising in a monastic author, devoting many lines to her birth, to her friendship with Malke and to her sorrow at his departure.³⁷ Since the occasion of Shomir's appearance in the narrative is the building of a monastery near Eshtin, we may accept this, also, together with the modest and unsuspect number of the brethren who gathered there. By contrast, the 'three years' and the 'seven years' at 'Amrin and the 'thirty brethren' should be treated with reserve (viii.4, 11).

³³ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [229-47].

³⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [247]; on the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, see the literature cited in Ch. 3, n. 201, and, specifically, G. Nedungatt, 'The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39 (1973), pp. 191-215; 419-44.

³⁵ Only otherwise found in *L. Jacob*, fol. 178a.2 (summary, p. 9), as the name of a Persian general.

³⁶ *L. Simeon Stylites*, pp. 508, 516-19, 543.

³⁷ *Leg. Malke*, pp. 422, 424, 427-8, 430-1, 434-5, 438, 440, 442.

I have already suggested tentatively that Samuel's second monastery may have been placed by the authentic tradition on the site of the monastery of Mor Abay near Qeeth and subsequently 're-sited' by our hagiographer to allow his interpolated Persian raiders to visit it from Nisibis. The statement that he afterwards went eastwards into the mountain for one day, leaving the Persian borders (ix.9-10), should accordingly be attributed to the same interpolator, who need not have had any special knowledge of the Roman-Persian frontier, beyond the tradition that Qartmin was in Roman territory, as testified by the successive imperial benefactions to the abbey during the fifth and early sixth centuries. It is the records of these, not this statement concerning Samuel's migration, which should be cited as evidence that the frontier lay to the east of Qartmin.³⁸

It is by a reference to the danger of Persian raids across the border that our writer seeks to explain the tradition that Samuel settled within a bow-shot of the village of Qartmin (ix.14-18; xv.18-19), a tradition which is today associated with a small ruin to the west of the spring, near the road which leads up to the abbey. This needs an explanation because Samuel's motivation throughout has been portrayed as a flight from society, even the society of like-minded men. If his main purpose in leaving the monastery of Mor Abay had been 'to get away from the Persian border' (ix.10), he might have found somewhere further from it than Qartmin. He left his first monastery by stealth and managed to be alone for three years, but 'God did not allow him to remain concealed' (viii.1, 4); when he left his second monastery he had to employ a ruse to prevent anyone from following him.

This portrait of a wily hermit in perpetual flight from humanity has the hallmark of the Syrian ascetical tradition. Compare the Addai, whom John of Ephesus, ever eager for the sight of a holy man, set out with a friend to trap in the mountains.³⁹ At the first attempt they failed because the holy man seemed to catch their scent and bolted like a wild animal. The second time they had more luck:

At noontide in the middle of the day we saw the old man passing over a certain clear space some distance off and coming down from one mountain towards another, there being a cleft in between; and we kept ourselves close lest he should see us and run away . . . But we, when we saw that he had sat down to rest, came down by a deep gully and went on until we arrived opposite the blessed man; and thus we suddenly came up and caught him. At the sight of us he was thunderstruck, as a man is frightened by the sudden sight of a lion. His eyes darted hither and thither, but when he saw there was no escape, he stood his ground and welcomed us. After praying, he arose and asked us, 'Whence have you come hither, blessed men, on this mountain?' We entreated him to sit down for a little, but he would not consent to sit down, in order that he might not be involved in a long conversation with human beings. Instead he told us, 'Go to the monastery and rest there and I will come at once.' We tried to say many things, but he opposed us with this proposition, that we should go to the monastery, for our comfort as he maintained, though in fact it was only so that he might escape from us.

Whether the crafty wildness of an Addai was attributed to Samuel by the authentic tradition or by a later hagiographer, his original settlement near the spring after which

³⁸ Dillemann, *Mésopotamie*, p. 229; Bell/Mango, *T.A.*, pp. iii-iv.

³⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [132-33].

Qartmin was apparently named⁴⁰ seems genuine, because of the improbability of a hagiographical invention which spontaneously placed him there, so near to a village, having previously maintained that he was in perpetual flight from society. In fact, however, such proximity seems characteristic of a certain type of monasticism prevalent in this area, to judge from the repeated pattern of a village next to its 'satellite' monastery or monasteries.⁴¹ Even the abbey of Qartmin itself is not so remote that it might not originally have been a kind of satellite of the village of Qartmin. In the Middle Ages (when Qartmin became Muslim⁴²) the abbey reverted to a subsidiary position as a distant 'moon' attached to the village of Beth Svritina, three hours' walk away over the mountains.⁴³ The social significance of this relationship between village and monastery will be explored at the end of Chapter 3. It is a striking characteristic of Tur 'Abdin, which makes the designation of that mountain as the 'Aghos of the East' singularly inappropriate.⁴⁴

It was the great number of monasteries on the plateau, set by a recent study at more than 80,⁴⁵ which inspired both this description and the translation of 'Tur 'Abdin' as 'Mountain of the Servants [of God]'.⁴⁶ The ancient monuments of Tur 'Abdin are nearly all Christian; yet the plateau has a long history of pre-Christian habitation. Assurnasirpal II found the area around Matiate (Midyat) densely settled with villages.⁴⁷

Strabo relates, amongst other customs, the tobogganing exploits of the inhabitants of Mt Masius,⁴⁸ but no ancient authority tells us what kind of religion was practised there before the advent of Christianity. It is possible that the ancient name Beth Gawgal, which we find attached to the escarpment which looks southwards onto the

⁴⁰ See IX.3; this amateur etymology is probably right for the second element, since *nin* is the word *mayo*, 'water', in its absolute state (a form frequently found in Semitic place-names); the existence of an abundant spring on this waterless plateau is distinctive indeed. But the first element can hardly be correct, in spite of the parallel with Mayogartie (cf. Ammianus XVII, 6.16; *Notit. Digra*, p. 79; Theophylact I.3.4); the construct *qarrah mayo* would surely have given a name with an aspirated TAW. But we know that the TAW was not aspirated, since Thomas of Margra, II.18 (see Budge's unnecessarily erudite note) spells the name with TETH: 'Qartmin', a form which has found some currency with the West-Syrians since the eighteenth century (Berlin MS Sachau 22.1). The confusion of TAW and TETH is phonetically impossible when there is a following vowel, so Assemani and those who copy him are wrong to write Qartamin/Qartamina. The Arabic-speaking inhabitants of the village call it Qartmin (O. Jastrow, *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen Galla-Dialekte*, I (Weisbaden, 1978), pp. viii).

⁴¹ Habemus, Salab, Hah, Beth Svritina, Beth Man'em, Artak, Qelch, 'Aynwardo, Karta, Beth Debeh and Midyat are among those exhibiting this conformation.

⁴² The fact that the inhabitants speak Arabic (see n. 40) may be of relevance in determining the date of their conversion to Islam.

⁴³ This relationship is attested by the *Book of Life*, which was later called, significantly, the *Book of Life of Beth Svritina and of the Abbey of Qartmin*; in 1902, for instance, the villagers clubbed together to re-tile the roof of the conventual church in the abbey, which the monks could not afford to do. A large number of monks were Syriacites and of the bishops who resided at Qartmin more than one in three came from this village. See Barawma, *T.4*, pp. 95-6, 53-5; *Isacr*, p. 14 (= *INSCR.* B.13); *INSCR.* A.18.

⁴⁴ This seems to have been introduced by Wigan, *The Separation of the Monophysites* (1923), p. 98.

⁴⁵ H. Aydin, *Das Mönchtum im Tur-'Abdin* (Glance, 1988) p. 3.

⁴⁶ That this is the correct interpretation is suggested by the Turuyo name *u iuro dai* 'abode', where 'abode' certainly means 'ascetics' (cf. Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, p. 813). The alternative explanation in *Lag. John of Kfome*, cited in Barawma, *T.4*, pp. 15-16, is historically worthless, but at least serves as a reminder that a literal translation would be 'Mountain of Slaves'. A scholastic derivation from the Greek to *habdion* (*ibid.*, p. 16) is absurd, but it may have given currency to the alternative spelling, Tur 'Abdin, with OLA.F instead of 'E, as in *INSCR.* B.11 (the earliest witness).

⁴⁷ Kestler, *Untersuchungen*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ Strabo, x.5.6.

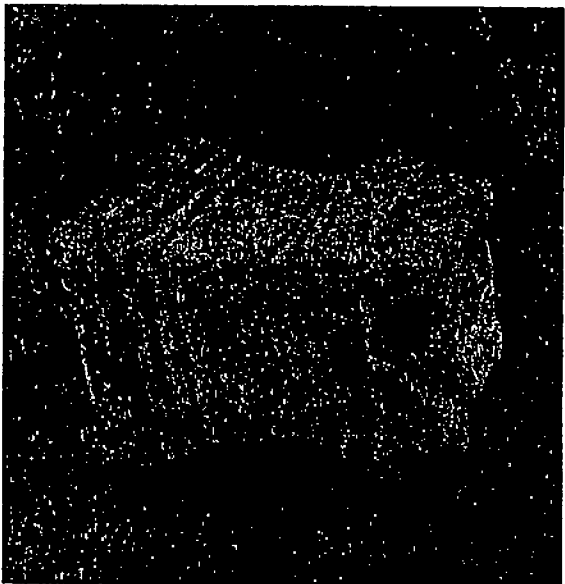


Fig. 3. Small pagan altar at the monastery of Mor Malke near Artak/Harabul (Photo: Hannes Cornet)

Mesopotamian plain, may be evidence of the cult of an Assyrian deity.⁴⁹ Aramaic inscriptions copied in Midyat, Hesno d-Kifo and Sani yield some theophoric names and a date which Pognon interprets as c. 200 BC.⁵⁰ Legends, not all explicitly limited to Tur 'Abdin, speak of tree-worship, of idols and of Zoroastrian fire-temples.⁵¹

Many a monastery or church, of idols and of Zoroastrian fire-temples.⁵¹ These reports, though their intrinsic authority is slight, are confirmed in some degree by other evidence. A small four-sided stone altar, which has a shallow bowl sculpted in its upper surface and four rounded horns at its corners (fig. 3), stands in the monastery of Mor Malke near Artak, where legend situated a Zoroastrian cult. It is interesting that the archaic ending of this village name is found in several other names in Tur 'Abdin.⁵² Azakh and Kivakh have been identified with Ashikh and Kibaki, and it seems to me probable that Khakhhi, in the territory of which lay Zazabukha (Zaz), is Hah.⁵³ Salab, like Zaz, has ancient arches on the north side of its main church, which suggest pre-

⁴⁹ *Gugal* or *gugallu* means 'inspector of canals' in Akkadian and is used as a title for the weather-god and for Abad, who is called 'gugallu of heaven and earth' (von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (1965), pp. 295-6; Edzard, *Die Mythologie der Sumerer und Akkader* (1961), p. 136), the alternative etymology suggested in *Mus 96* (1983), p. 8 n.17, is less attractive, because after 'Beth' we expect the name of a person, a tribe or a God, not a verb (unattested) or even a noun formed from such a verb.

⁵⁰ Soden, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 257; *Isacr*, p. 60, 61.

⁵¹ xxiii.7-9, 11-13; xxviii.7, *Lag. John of Kfome*, foll. 2b-3a; *Lag. Malke*, p. 443 etc.

⁵² See n. 51.

⁵³ In addition to those discussed here, note Haldan, Ahlab, Mizzah, Salab.

⁵⁴ cf. Kestler, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 41, 43, 51-4.

Christian buildings.⁵⁵ Between the abbey of Qartmin and Kivakh is a ruin which may be the largest pagan complex in Ṭur 'Abdin. It will be described at the beginning of Chapter 2.

Tree-worship, attested by the *Life of Aḥo* for neighbouring Armenia in the sixth century, seems certain to have influenced the design of the bronze trees erected at Qartmin in 512 (LX.15–LXI.2; cf. p. 127). There were still pagans in the region of Samosata in the twelfth century, who sought, as converts to Christianity, to continue their veneration of trees under the name of the Cross.⁵⁶ These appear to have belonged to a group called 'the sons of the Sun'. The so-called Shemsiye, a sect of Armenian sun- or fire-worshippers, were numerous in the upper Tigris region as late as the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ The Yezidis of Ṭur 'Abdin with their holy groves may perhaps also be seen as the heirs of local paganism.⁵⁸

The very scarcity of this evidence is eloquent testimony to the thoroughness of the Christian missionaries.⁵⁹ Baršawm is right to say that there are no reliable witnesses to the conversion of Ṭur 'Abdin before the fourth century.⁶⁰ But the Awgin Cycle of hagiographical legends and the *Life of Jacob of Nisibis*, which Baršawm cites, are also late inventions.⁶¹ They nonetheless contain a grain of truth.⁶² Comparison with better-documented areas and inference from its known history authorize us to believe that Ṭur 'Abdin was purged of paganism in the fourth century by Christian monks.⁶³

The value of the *Life of Samuel* is that, unlike many local accounts concerning fourth-century monasticism in this area, we can distinguish in its elements of a genuine tradition. Samuel of Eshtin did not belong to the first phalanx of missionary monks. Paganism was evidently dead before his arrival at Qartmin. Like Daniel of Aghlosh, his contemporary, he found in his ruin only the demons who had once been accustomed to

⁵⁵ Illustrated in Bell/Mango, *TA*, pl. 241; Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, I, fig. 18. According to *L. Jacob*, fol. 178a.2, summary, p. 9, it was a temple of the Persian god 'Herakles'. On Nimrud Dagh, Antiochus I of Commagene had identified Herakles with Verethraghna (Wahram); such syncretism was common currency in Mesopotamia. Šalaḥ had belonged in the third century to Persia. Pognon records a fourteenth-century building inscription on this side of the church, but he is not sufficiently explicit about its location for us to determine whether it included the arches (*Inscriptions*, pp. 70–1); certainly the arches themselves are very ancient, since no such massive stonework is found in Ṭur 'Abdin in the Middle Ages. If they had belonged to a church, they would have been incorporated in a restoration. The same applies to the unpublished arch near the church of Mor Dimej in Zaz.

⁵⁶ D. Chwolson, *Die Sabier und der Sabismus*, I (1856), p. 293.

⁵⁷ Chwolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 292–5; Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia etc.*, II (1840), pp. 284–5; Göyünc, *XVI. Yüzyılda Mardin Sancagı* (1969), pp. 77–9; as late as c. 1610 the Shemsiye had a temple outside the Mardin gate of Diyarbakir.

⁵⁸ From the abbey of Qartmin can be seen to the north *Khān Bābē*, 'the hostelry of Job', a holy grove and burial place of the Yezidis, on whom see now J.S. Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival* (London, 1987).

⁵⁹ Cf. G. Fowden, in *JTS* NS 29 (1978), pp. 53–78 (at p. 68); a similar observation concerning the limestone plateau east of Antioch. On the epigraphic evidence for the Christianization of Syria, see W. Liebeschütz, in *Limes* 2, ed. J. Fitz (Budapest, 1977), pp. 485–507.

⁶⁰ Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 16–18 ('The Arrival of Christianity in Ṭur 'Abdin'), especially p. 17.

⁶¹ On the legend of Awgin and the Awgin Cycle, see J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide* (1904), pp. 302f; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, pp. 235–7, with the qualifications of J.-M. Fiey, *Anal. Boll.* 80 (1962), pp. 52–81; *id.*, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq* (Louvain, 1970), pp. 100–10; the evidence is too fragmentary to allow us to say to what extent the legend corresponds to the truth. On the *Legend of Jacob*, see P. Peeters, *Anal. Boll.* 38 (1920), pp. 285–373.

⁶² Fiey (*Jalons*, p. 111) comes to the conclusion that monasticism spread from Nisibis and Amida in two 'tribal movements' during the fourth century.

⁶³ For the role of the monks throughout the Eastern Empire in enforcing the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius, see G. Fowden, *JTS* NS 29 (1978), pp. 53–78.

the smoke of sacrifice.⁶⁴ The conversion of Ṭur 'Abdin had been completed by an earlier generation. The first monks of Qartmin were free to direct their efforts further afield, to Armenia and Persia, where three of them died as martyrs.⁶⁵

It was, in all likelihood, the Tigris crossing at Çelik which, by allowing trans-Tigris traffic to enter Ṭur 'Abdin from the north-east, made Khabkhi of the Assyrian records a prosperous land.⁶⁶ If it is right to equate Khabkhi with Ḥaḥ, we have here a ready explanation for the early prominence of this town. 'Ammi, a native of Ḥaḥ, who was bishop of Ṭur 'Abdin in the fifth century, died as a martyr in Ṭanezin, not far from Çelik on the Persian side of the Tigris.⁶⁷ No doubt he went there to preach the Gospel.

The church of the Mother of God in Ḥaḥ has a unique form among the churches of Ṭur 'Abdin and a unique feature in its sanctuary: a semi-circle of arched niches around the altar, resembling an episcopal *synthronos*.⁶⁸ This, together with the size of the original settlement, which once had at least eight churches, strongly suggests that it was the first bishopric of Ṭur 'Abdin. From 614 to 1088 the bishop of Ṭur 'Abdin resided at Qartmin Abbey. Briefly in the mid-eighth century, and for a long period after 1088/9, a separate bishop of Ṭur 'Abdin was consecrated; he seems to have resided in or near Ḥaḥ.⁶⁹ This is best explained as a reversion to ancient precedent.

The largest church in Ḥaḥ, which may date originally from the fifth century, though it shows signs of a later rebuilding, is that of the martyr Sovo.⁷⁰ Now, we read in the *Life of Samuel* that he visited Nyoḥto, a village identified by a marginal note as Ḥaḥ,⁷¹ and erected there an oratory on the north side of the 'great church', near which the inhabitants built a monastery in his name (XXXI.1–12). On the north side of the church of Mor Sovo at Ḥaḥ there is a small chapel dedicated to 'Mor Samuel' at a depth suggestive of great antiquity.⁷² It may be that this is a reliable record of the existence of buildings on these sites in the early fifth century.

This dedication to Sovo in the Christian capital of Ṭur 'Abdin is of great significance. Sovo (*alias* Pirgushnasp) was a Persian prince of the mid-fourth century, who was put to death for his Christian faith in the very part of Persian territory that most closely bordered on Ṭur 'Abdin.⁷³ The title of the great church at Ḥaḥ may be seen as a gesture of defiance directed against the neighbouring Zoroastrian state.

Another Persian martyr, Dodho, is commemorated in the names of churches at Beth

⁶⁴ xxviii.6; *L. Daniel*, fol. 98b.2, 100a.1; summary, p. 61.

⁶⁵ xxiii.6–7, 15; two more martyrs at xxii.18–19. ⁶⁶ Kessler, *Untersuchungen*, p. 54.

⁶⁷ See p. 78; Ṭanezin is Tanzi on the Turkish map, 5 km from the confluence of the Bokhtan Çay and the Tigris and about 10 km from Çelik; cf. Baršawm, *TA*, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Mundell Mango, in eds. Garsoian *et al.*, *East of Byzantium* (1982), pl. 26.

⁶⁹ Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 48 n. 4; for the residence of Bishop Cyriac of Ṭur 'Abdin, see *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, pp. 285–9, where the narrative seems to imply that he lived near Ḥaḥ, though not in it (p. 289, lines 5–6). The Monastery of the Cross, visible, but at least two and a half hours' walk away from Ḥaḥ, was the residence of the bishop in the fourteenth century: Baršawm, *TA*, p. 145; cf. *BO* II, p. 460; J.M. Fiey, *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981–2), pp. 14–16.

⁷⁰ Bell/Mango, *TA*, fig. 10, pp. 18–19, 112–13; S. Guyer, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 38 (1916), pp. 209–12; Mundell (in Bryer/Herrin, *Iconoclasm* (1977), p. 65 n. 74) argues for a date in the first half of the sixth century.

⁷¹ *Nyoḥto* (not 'Ḥaḥta', *pace* Mango, in Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 111) is a noun, meaning 'requiem (feast)', 'funeral banquet'.

⁷² Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 111; Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, I, pp. 120–3 with fig. 11. There are five steps down to the entrance.

⁷³ See *Leg. Sovo* with Hoffmann's notes; *Cal. TA*, 23 Jan.: 'Saint Sovo of the great church of Ḥaḥ and his 12,000 fellow-martyrs'.

Svirina and al Hespis, which both claim to possess relics of him.¹⁴ The Roman-Persian border ran very near these two villages, so that these dedications, too, may be seen as reflecting a certain consciousness that the inhabitants of this salient of the frontier were the representatives of the Christian empire in the face of the pagan enemy. Like the ideological symbolism which conditions life on either side of the Berlin Wall, religion in Tur 'Abdin took a sharp inverse impression from that of the ever-imminent Persian empire.

¹⁴ Bell/Mango, *T.A.*, pp. 100-1, quoting the Appendix to *Chr. Gregory* in Budge's publication; Wiesner, *Kuldbauten*, II, pp. 205-11; Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur 'Abdin* (1982), plate on p. 230; for the *Life* of Dodo (fragmentary), see AMS IV, pp. 218-21 and Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märryer* (1880), pp. 33-4 (there is a much longer version, which I hope to edit from MSS in Qartmin and Kirchard).

2

Marked out by an angel: The foundation of Qartmin Abbey

1. 'The Arches of Mor Gabriel'

A pagan temple, or 'house of idols', was associated by a secondary tradition with the foundation of the abbey of Qartmin (xxviii.5f). This probably owes something to the frequent occurrence of the theme in hagiography, as documented in the last chapter.¹ The summons to Constantine to exorcize the daughter of the emperor is itself something of a *topos*,² and, in the *Life of Samuel*, this episode follows directly on the mention of the 'house of idols'. The device by which the hagiographer, embellishing, as we have seen, an authentic tradition with additional fancies, saves his hero the effort of a journey to Constantinople and back by making him send a letter imbued with power seems to be a conscious variation of the conventional theme. It is possible that the author was influenced by the *Life of Malke*.³

But whatever the literary inspiration of our writer, there existed another source from which he may have got the idea of a pagan temple on or near the site of the abbey, namely the material remains which apparently predated the foundation. These are still there today and they still provoke speculation about pagan antecedents. It is with them that I begin this investigation of how the abbey was founded and built.

To build one must quarry rock, a relatively easy matter in Tur 'Abdin, where every region has limestone in abundance, though some have it with a smoother or a harder texture than others. There is no obvious quarry face in the vicinity of Qartmin, so far as I am aware. But there is an excellent quarry of ready-hewn stones which was certainly used by the monks. Nor was it ever exhausted.

This is the ruin called *geshiothe d-mar gawriyye* by the local Syrians, meaning 'The

¹ Ch. I, n. 51.

² There is a parallel in the life of Morutho of Mayperqat (*DHGE*, x.1, col. 142, referring to Yaqu' iv, pp. 703-7). *Leq. Malke* (pp. 450f) and *Leq. Aaron* (pp. 328-9f) are only two of the more 'literary' hagiographies that attest the popularity of the theme.

³ Leaving aside the frequent stylistic parallels between the novelistic parts of the *Life of Samuel* and the text of the *Life of Malke*, consider only: that Malke's arrival at Arkaḥ was associated with the rescue of a small boy from the jaws of death; that the boy's father gave his son to Malke as a disciple; that Malke's monastery was built on a ruined temple; and that the demon of the place took his revenge by entering the emperor's daughter, so that Malke would be obliged to travel to Constantinople to exorcize her.

Key:

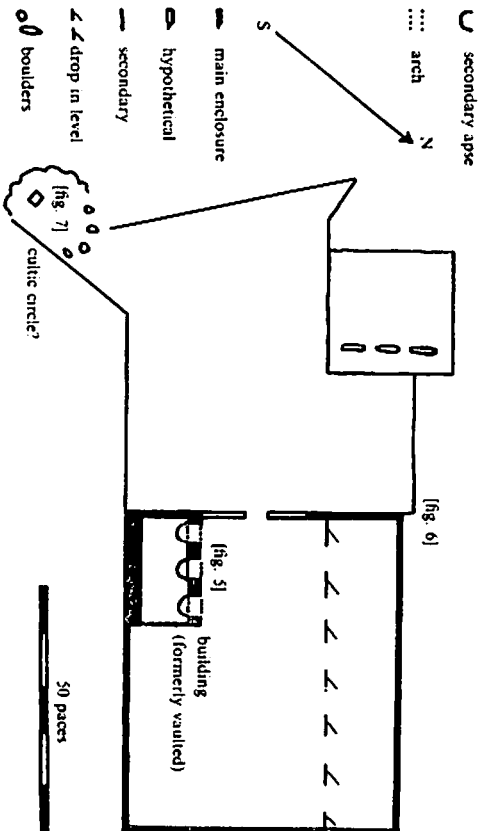


Fig. 4. Plan of 'The Arches of Mor Gabriel' Derialmin, a pagan cultic site between the abbey of Qartmin and the village of Kiwakh

Arches of St Gabriel' (fig. 4). It lies south-south-east of the monastery at maybe a thousand paces, so it may well be the DERALMIN of the Turkish map.⁴

As for the arches which are the most prominent feature of the site, they formed the north-west side of a small vaulted building in the south corner of a large enclosure. I infer that the building was vaulted from the fact that the part of the south-eastern wall opposite the arches, like the arches themselves, was 10 ft thick. However, there were apses closing the arches on the south-eastern side, so that either the building was a very curious one, indented by outward-facing open-air apses, or else the apses were built on to the arches after the vault collapsed.

The latter is not only more probable: the construction of the apses out of squared rectangular blocks apparently taken from a wall also indicates a later, makeshift rearrangement. The blocks have not been shaped at all to fit together in a cup formation and, because of their size, the curved vault of the apses is very irregular in shape (fig. 5).

The rectangular enclosure of which this building filled the south angle is divided along a line parallel to its north-western wall into an upper and a lower terrace. The north-western wall itself is preserved at points to a height of two metres or more, especially at the western and northern angles (fig. 6). It is constructed of large hewn blocks of stone, as were the other three walls of the main enclosure. Less solid, perhaps, was the construction of the walls which extend this enclosure in a somewhat irregular fashion towards the south-west. The irregularity seems designed to accommodate two special areas, one at the southernmost extremity of the site, bordered by boulders and

⁴ Arabic: *dayr al-mih* = 'monastery of the water'. The water in question would be that of the cisterns on the eastward side of the ruins.



Fig. 5. Arch at Derialmin, converted into an apse with stones from the wall

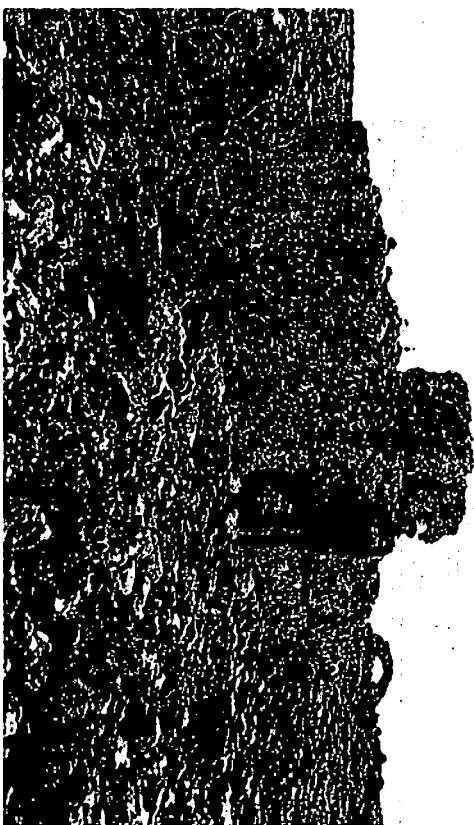


Fig. 6. West corner of the main precinct, Derialmin

bed-rock and containing a remarkable projection of the bed-rock in the shape of a solid 'lectern' (fig. 7), the other not far from the western angle of the main enclosure, walled in squarely and containing three upstanding, unshaped rocks in a row.

Two features of the site make it certain that it was used as a quarry by the monks of Qartmin. One is the absence by the dismantled walls of any rubble or scattered blocks of stone. The other is the existence of a boulder-free clearway between the ruin and the monastery, banked with rocks and relatively smooth, which must have been the track used to transport materials between the two sites. Probably soil was compacted on it to make it really smooth; but this soil has since been washed away, leaving some awkward patches. Yet even so the contrast with the surrounding terrain is emphatic.

The monks, then, used the ruin as a quarry. But what had the ruin been? It is far away from the nearest village; and even if isolated farmsteads were a feature of this region, which they are not, it would be difficult to see it in this light. It might be a pagan cult-centre; or perhaps an ancient monastery. Against the latter might be set the absence of any outline on the ground which might have been the foundation for a block of cells or a refectory, although wooden structures may have disappeared without a trace. Moreover, the only obvious edifice is unlike any church known in this area. To these arguments may be added the following doubts: would Christian monks have had a use for the 'special areas' to the south-west of the main enclosure with their significantly placed rocks? And would they have dismantled the enclosure if it had belonged to a monastery?

The answer to the latter question might be that the community decided to move to a more spacious site, taking its buildings with it. Yet one would expect them, like the inhabitants of Torcello, to leave at least their church intact. What they do seem to have left intact were the arches themselves with their makeshift apses, though these have partly fallen down since then. This suggests that the apses did have religious significance for the monks. Probably it was they who had turned the arches into apses. The south-east orientation was near enough to the right direction.

I suggest that the original building and its enclosure with the adjoining complex formed a pagan cult-centre, which Christian solitaires, living perhaps in the extensive caves below the site to the east and north-east, transformed into an oratory by displacing a few blocks from the walls to construct apses of a kind behind the arches. When the community grew, it shifted to the site of the abbey, using the ruin as a quarry, but leaving the 'oratory' standing.

The foundation legend of the abbey tells how the aged Samuel of Eshtin, fleeing Persian territory with a relic of his spiritual father, the martyred bishop Karpos of Sawro, came to Qartmin and settled near the spring about a bow-shot to the north of the village (ix.8-14; xv.18-19). The recovery of Simeon, the ailing son of one of the richer villagers, after Samuel had prayed over the martyr's relic on his behalf, led the boy's father, Šlivo, to build a church in the name of Karpos in his village and to promise Samuel his son for a disciple. He also promised the holy man money with which to build and sustain a monastery (x.7-8).

Samuel and his disciple remained for a while near the village, but after a time decided it would be better to distance themselves from it. They set off from Qartmin 'towards the east and a little north' and walked until they came to a certain ruin, where they



Fig. 7. Cultic area at south end of Deralmin

decided to make an oratory (xvii.5-12). The word is *beth šlutho*, literally 'house of prayer'; but to judge by the application of the term in Tur 'Abdin, where it designates an apse at the east end of a courtyard consistently placed on the south side of a village church, it is not so much a house as a prayer-niche in an open area surrounded by a wall.⁵

However, that night, an angel showed Simeon another site in a vision and marked it out with three large stone blocks. One of these, 'shaped by a craftsman of ancient times', was left hanging a span or more above the ground (xviii.15-17). In the morning Samuel learned of his disciple's vision and they both set off 'from the east towards the west' and found the three marker-stones, one of them suspended in mid-air (xx.13-15). Around them they built their oratory, on a much larger scale than seemed necessary, because the angel had promised Simeon that their community would attain vast proportions (xix.1-7).

This legend can be interpreted with reference to the ruin under discussion. It certainly lies to the east, perhaps a little to the north, of Qartmin village. But it does not lie exactly to the east of the abbey. The direction is more like south-south-east. This mistake might be explained as follows: the writer was envisaging the departure of the founders from the ruin, so he momentarily left out of account such known constants as the orientation of the abbey and the place of the sunrise; instead he thought of the apses in the ruin as oratories and assumed that they indicated the east. Since the apses face the abbey it would follow that the abbey lay to the west of the ruin.

The legend has certain features which suggest an early date. The most telling of these

⁵ Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 93; Bell/Mango, *TA*, pp. x, 13-14; Appendix, section I.

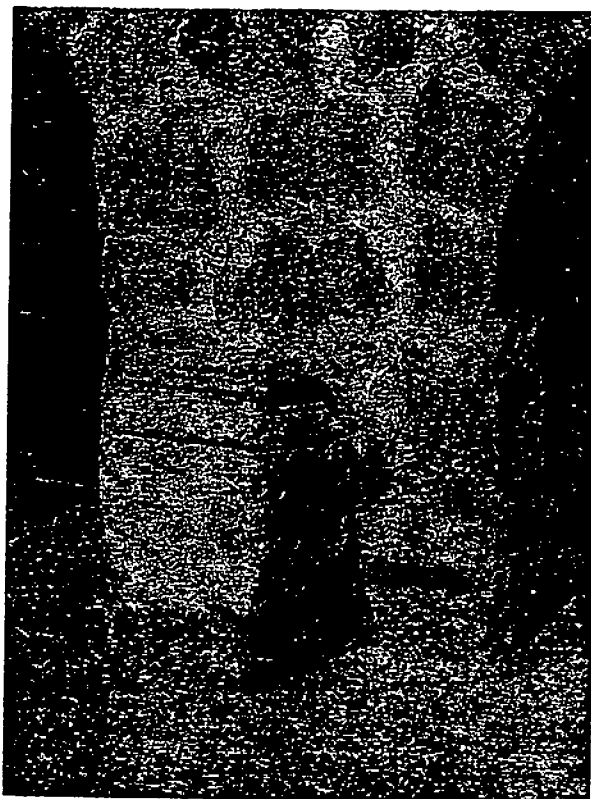


Fig. 8. Stone, possibly identical with the 'Hanging Stone', identified in the *Life of Samuel* as the base for a pagan statue

is the present tense used of the oratory marked out by Simeon and the angel (xviii. 13, 17–18; xxi. 4, 5). The writer speaks of this building as standing in his day; he even avers that the hanging stone is there 'still today, with nothing to support it' (xviii. 18). (This compels us to try to find a rational explanation, in spite of the legendary parallels;⁶ Nau 'would willingly see here a kind of dolmen',⁷ but one might also imagine ways in which the stone could have been inconspicuously supported from beneath.) Now, the church built in the reign of Anastasius and finished in 512 was 'placed on the foundations laid by the angel and Mor Simeon' (Lix. 10). That seems to put the composition of the legend back into the fifth century.

On the other hand, there is a close parallel with the famous Syriac *Life of Simeon the*

⁶ cf. Gaster, *The Asatir* (1927), p. 214, with references.

⁷ Nau, *Actes du XIVe congr. orient.* (Paris, 1907), p. 9 n. 1.

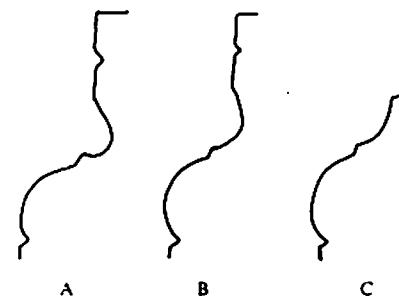


Fig. 9. Profile of the stone in fig. 8, compared with those of two similar stones on either side of the entrance to the conventual church at Qartmin

Stylite, which was composed shortly after that saint's death in 459.⁸ Compare xviii. 12–18 with the following:

Afterwards the angel took him up a mountain and made him stand on the summit of it; and he showed him certain stones that were placed there and said to him, 'Take them and build!' The holy one said to him, 'I do not know how to build, for I have never yet built anything.' The angel said to him, 'Stay where you are! I shall teach you how to build,' and he brought a certain hewn stone that was most beautifully sculpted. This he put in Mor Simeon's hands and he said to him, 'Set it up on the east side, and another on the north side, and another on the south side, and put one on top of them!' (*L. Simeon Stylites*, p. 510)

If influence is admitted here, our legend belongs to the latter part of the fifth century. It is therefore not improbable that it preserves a genuine, if confused and 'telescoped', tradition about the way the abbey was founded, which we can deduce independently from the ruin itself and from the track between the ruin and the abbey.

There are three shaped stones near the entrance of the Great Church in the abbey, only one of which is preserved in its entirety, although it looks as if the other two were once exactly like it. The truncated pair lie under the vault of the antechapel on either side of the door; the complete stone stands in the courtyard against the pillar to the right of the central arch of the arcade which forms the west side of the antechapel (fig. 8). The consistency of the stone is almost that of marble and its shoulders are graced with a wave-shaped moulding. The remaining parts of the other two stones also have truncated mouldings, the profile of which conforms approximately to the pattern of the first (fig. 9).

It is tempting to see in these the inspiration for the three stones of the legend, 'shaped by a craftsman of ancient times' (xviii. 16). But what were they made for? Column-bases, or statue bases, one would think. The latter explanation may have occurred to the interpolator responsible for section 16 of the *Qartmin Trilogy*. He writes:

⁸ Hilgenfeld/Lietzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites* (1908), pp. 215–23; Delehaye, *Les Saints stylites* (1923), pp. vi–xvii.

This ruin had formerly been a house of idols and Samuel had found there the bases on which inane statues had been placed with their inscriptions still legible. But as soon as he erased them . . . (xxviii.6–8)

The ruin in question is presumably that which was mentioned before in the foundation legend, namely the one where Samuel originally intended to settle. The translation of the word *sheryone* as 'bases' finds no support in the dictionaries, but a passage in the *Life of Baršawmo* encourages us at least to apply the word to stone, as seems required by the context. The writer probably envisaged the three arches as displaying three statues mounted on the stones I have described. Though no doubt a guess, this explanation should not be dismissed out of hand. The stones may indeed be witnesses to pagan precedence on the site either of the abbey or of the ruin.

2. Early buildings

a. The oratory

Sections 10 and 11 of the *Life of Samuel* were apparently written in the second half of the fifth century, for the reasons set out above. The writer describes the building of the first oratory or *beth šlutho*:

They began in the west side, near the two marker-stones placed by the angel and Mor Simeon. The first stone they placed in the foundations of the west door. On this stone they engraved a cross and an inscription and everyone gets a blessing from it on entering and leaving [the church]. The door is open to the west. A little way from it to the north on the second marker they placed another door, which looks south. This is called 'the Reservoir Door'. (xxi.1–7)

The angel had shown Simeon a wide area for the oratory, marked out by three stones. When the founders had first arrived, approaching from the east, they had found the Hanging Stone (xx.13) and then the other two 'placed to north and south of the centre' (xx.14). It is clearly these that are referred to in the passage quoted above. The third block is elsewhere (xviii.15) explicitly said to be to the east of the other two. The 'wide expanse' that the angel and Simeon measured out 'from east to west and from north to south' (xviii.20) is most naturally interpreted as a rectangular area (fig. 11). The three stones seem to have been placed in a roughly triangular formation, the axis of the triangle coinciding with the east–west axis of the oratory (this is the easiest way to understand 'the centre'). Presumably, the stone in the west door was near the south corner of the west wall, whereas the stone in the north door was near the west corner of the north wall. As for the third stone, it is likely to have marked the centre of the east wall, where perhaps an apse was built, as in the surviving examples of the typical Tur 'Abdin oratory or *beth šlutho*.

The Hanging Stone, since it was only 'a span or more above the ground' (xviii.17) cannot have been the keystone of the apse, which would in any case surely not have caused such astonishment. More probably it was used as a lectern in front of the apse. If it was propped up by supports placed near the centre of its lower surface and placed in a shallow pit, it might have seemed to the credulous to be suspended there, and it would not have been easy to observe the hidden supports.

What causes more genuine astonishment is the statement (xxi.6) that the door to the north of the west door 'looks south'. Even if, as seems likely, we are speaking of an open area with an enclosure-wall, it would be extremely odd to describe a door in the north side of that enclosure as looking south. The text must therefore be marked as corrupt. Either 'south' should be read 'north', or else a line has been left out because the scribe skipped from one phrase to an identical phrase in the line below. It is very easy to imagine this, if the original text read as follows: 'on the second marker they placed another door [which looks north, and to the south of it, another door] which looks south.'

The door to the north of the west door cannot have been another door looking west, for then the writer would not have spoken in absolute terms of 'the west door' (xviii.13; xxi.3). If it is true that the Anastasian church was built on the site of this early oratory (lix.10), then the existence of a cistern near the east end of the south side of this church may confirm my suggested emendation of the text, because the door which looked south was called 'the Reservoir Door'!

b. The cistern

There is no reason to doubt that sections 12 and 13 of the *Life of Samuel* are what they appear to be, interpolations in a pre-existent text. Thus, at the start of section 14, we read: 'And so let us return to our story, from where they built the Reservoir Door' (xxvi.20).

But the writer cleverly used the interpolation to bridge a gap in the earlier text between the sole presence of Samuel and Simeon and the arrival of other monks, who helped to build the cistern, the cells and the surrounding wall, and who later added the 'Temple of Mor Samuel' (xxvii.1,7f). If such a gap existed in the earlier text, that text itself may have been a compilation, including the foundation legend and several records of building at the abbey, but excluding any discussion of how the community grew. If this was so, then the later redactor has probably rewritten the first line of the new section (xxvii.1) to make it seem as if 'the monks', who are here introduced for the first time, unannounced, had somehow also been involved in building the oratory, although when we left them at the end of section 11, Samuel and Simeon were still apparently alone.

The dimensions given for the cistern can be converted by a formula derived from section 19 of the *Life of Gabriel* and the measurements of the building there described, which is still standing. Taking a cubit as equal to c.40 cm we obtain: Length – 16 metres; breadth – 14.4 metres; height – 10 metres.

If the data are consistent, the cistern should be identified with that on the south side of the Great Church, near the south-eastern angle. I have not been able to examine this cistern from within, so I cannot say whether it is of the right dimensions and constructed of three vaults. But there is another cistern to the west of the ruins around the abbey, on the side facing Qartmin village, which very much resembles that described in our text, though it is bigger. The external measurements of the rectangular casing of its vault, which projects a few feet above the ground, are c.26 (E–W) × c.22 (N–S) metres. The pit within must therefore measure about 24 × 20 metres. It is divided down its length into three vaults, supported in the centre by four great pillars carrying six wide arches, which

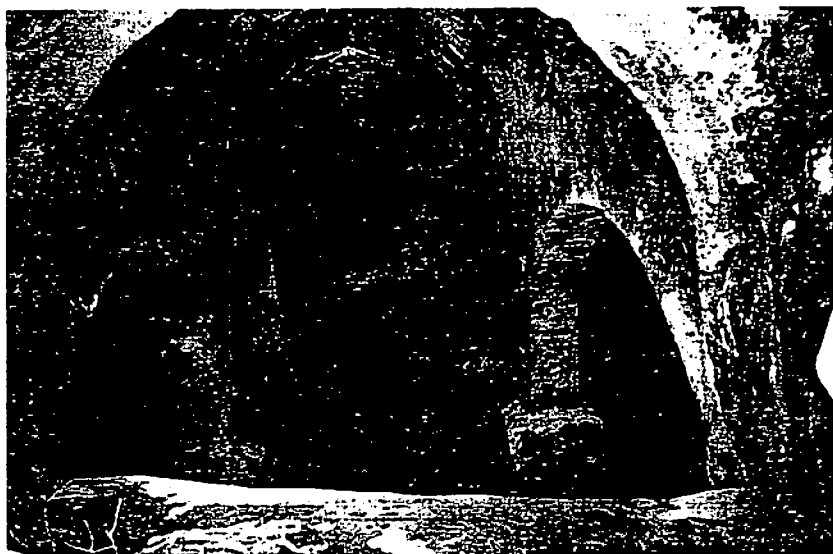


Fig. 10. Cistern with triple vault at west end of ruins, Qartmin

run in two parallel lines. The height is about 10 metres. Outside, from the west, a 'gutter or channel', just as described in our text, leads for about 100 metres towards the cistern, apparently to collect and direct the rainwater which falls on that ground. It was recently renovated, as was the cistern (figs. 10 and 11).

This cistern is certainly of ancient construction. In spite of the discrepancy in size (and perhaps its walls are so thick that this is not so great as it appears), one might be tempted to identify it with the cistern described in our text. One would then have to argue that, in adapting the first lines of section 14, a later redactor had wrongly conflated this cistern (for which the word *qevyo* is used) and the reservoir (*pesqin*) which he presumed to have been situated outside the 'Door of the Reservoir'. The false measurements might be explained as an inaccurate attempt to gauge the size of the dark interior of a cistern that was already full of water.

If this is correct, the phrase 'on the inward side of it' (xxvii.6) becomes easier to understand, since the cistern is just outside the trace of an ancient enclosure-wall; and the most likely place for the cells and the 'Temple of Mor Samuel' is among the ruins on the other side of that wall, between the cistern and the putative site of the oratory (fig. 11).

My suggestion is therefore that section 14 originally began: 'The monks dug and made this deep cistern ...' and that the interpolator of sections 12 and 13, in an attempt to make the story follow on from the end of section 11, which speaks of the 'Reservoir Door' on the south side of the oratory, added the words here bracketed: '[And outside

this door] the monks dug [again] and made ...' Some confirmation that this is right might be seen in the fact that the word 'again', in this position, makes poor sense.

The calculation of the capacity of a cistern is not a simple matter, since we should need to know the rainfall on the catchment area and the rate of loss through seepage and evaporation. Even Cuinet's estimate of five dry months in the year in our area (*La Turquie d'Asie*, II (1891), p. 415) and Hütteroth's data on the average rainfall (*Türkei* (1982), fig. 35: between 600 and 1,000 mm) might need revision for ancient times, when the area was more densely afforested. But even if we take the capacity of the cistern described in the *Life* as being limited to a notional maximum depth of one metre we obtain the sum of 230,400 litres (16 m × 14.4 m × 1 m), which would have had to last, with natural loss, not more than c. 150 days. If 1,500 litres of water were available for every day of the dry season, and if the builders were gauging the size of the cistern to cater for a maximum expected number of inmates, including visitors, we might calculate that the number they had in mind was c. 500 (xxvii.5-6; cf. Chapter 3, n. 173).

c. The wall

On the inward side of it [the cistern] Mor Samuel and Mor Simeon and the rest of the brethren set to and built cells with a wall around them; and they called it *Beth Shuroye*; and in it they built the Temple of Mor Samuel. (xxvii.6-9)

If the cistern were to be identified with the reservoir on the south side of the Great Temple, on the basis of the two statements (a) that it was on the south side of the first oratory (xxi.6-7; xxvi.19-xxvii.1) and (b) that the Great Temple was built on the foundations of that oratory (lix.10, 17-19), it is difficult to see what could be meant by 'the inward side' of it, whether in terms of the buildings which have been described up to this point, or in terms of the monastic complex as a whole. If, however, the cistern is in fact identical with that on the south-western side of the ruins, then the phrase has a plain sense, both in relation to the oratory/Great Temple, and in relation to the whole monastery.

The outline of an ancient enclosure wall can be traced around most of the ruins in a roughly rectangular shape. It seems to have been dismantled to its foundations, although on the west and on the east it has since been partially reconstructed in less massive and less well-cut stone. The whole circumference of the area formerly encompassed is about 610 metres, which gives over 23,000 square metres of potentially built-up area. The original enclosure-wall described in this passage must have been rather smaller. It is not even said explicitly that it included the oratory, which may therefore have formed a separate enclosure to the north-east. The wording invites the concept of a space between the oratory and the cistern where the residential enclosure was built.

The wall between the cistern and the ruins on the south-western side may therefore belong to the original enclosure. The foundations running out approximately south-eastwards across the line of the present driveway to a very clear right-angle near an oak-tree, where the ground begins to slope steeply away into the valley, have every appearance of great antiquity (a new wall was built on them in 1985). I suggest that these foundations and the wall which continues on their line to the north-west mark the south-west side of the original enclosure. The southern angle was that near the oak-tree

and the western angle was where the wall now departs from the straight line of the first two sections. The north-western side of the putative enclosure would have extended from this point at right-angles towards the south-eastern wall of the burial vaults, including the cistern opening near the west wall of the church of the Mother of God. The enclosure would have included that church and the 'Cistern of the Star' to the south-east of it, supposing that the buildings constructed with the funds sent by the emperors of the House of Theodosius were built within a pre-existing wall, except for the burial vaults and so on, which may have been placed outside. The Roman law forbidding burials within the city wall may have had an analogous effect at this date on the lay-out of a monastery (cf. p. 81). Everything that is said about the first imperial benefactions is compatible with this scheme, as will be explained hereafter. The enclosure thus formed would be approximately 6,800 m².

The meaning of 'Beth Shuroye'

'They called it *Beth Shuroye*' (xxvii.8). In this problematic phrase, the pronoun 'it', being feminine, must represent the Syriac *dayro*, 'monastery', though that has not been used explicitly, for it is implicit in the preceding phrase: 'they built cells with a wall around them'; here the pronominal 'them', being masculine, apparently refers to the monks, not the cells. It was enough, therefore, to describe a group of monks surrounding themselves with a wall, in order that the idea of a monastery should be suggested.

The Syriac word here used for 'wall' is *shuro*. Its close proximity in our text to the mysterious appellation *Beth Shuroye* creates the strong presumption that the two are connected. There could be no grammatical objection to understanding *shuroye* as the plural form of an adjective formed from *shuro*, though the dictionaries give no support to this. According to them, the only meaning of *shuroyo/shuroye* is 'beginning', from the root *shari*, 'he began'. If this is right, then *Beth Shuroye* means 'House of Beginning(s)' (*Beth* really designates a kin-group or equivalent community with its buildings and fields and possessions; it is frequently found in the names of early monasteries, such as the abbey itself, which was once called '*umro d-Beth Mor Shem'un*', 'the abbey of the House of Mor Simeon'⁹). The 'beginning' in question might be a spiritual one, the 'new beginning' of the monastic profession, or what Cyril, in his commentary on Luke, more generally calls 'the beginning of the world which has no end'.¹⁰ This commentary exists in a Syriac translation, which translates 'beginning' (*arkhē*) by the plural *shuroye*, instead of the more usual singular *shuroyo*. It may be this rare plural that we have to deal with here. At another place, where it does not belong to the ancient tradition (xxix.2), we find the phrase: 'Samuel, abbot of the Shuroye'; the manuscripts have singular, *d-shuroyo*, but since this is a secondary accretion, it is not essential to our enquiry whether the text originally had the plural, as I think.

On the other hand, 'House of Beginning' is an allusive phrase without any parallel. The nearest usage in monastic terminology is the word *sharwoyo* (from the same root *shari*), meaning 'novice'. Besides, there is evidence that the Syrians themselves later found the phrase baffling, and did not think to translate it in this way. Instead, they

⁹ See Ch. 3, n. 2.

¹⁰ Cyril, *Comm. Luc.*, p. 180.

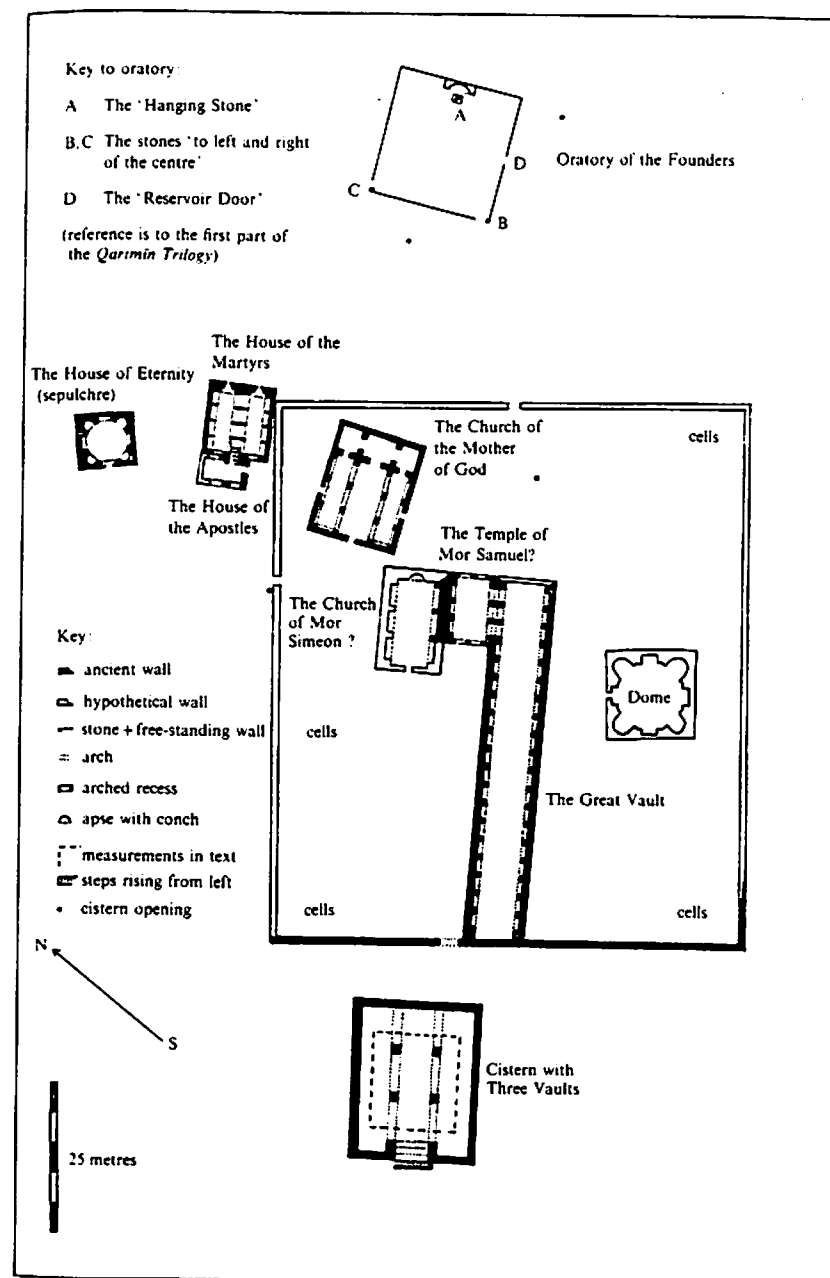


Fig. 11. The abbey of Qartmin in the fifth century, a partly conjectural plan based on the *Life of Samuel*, and remains of the buildings there described

apparently resorted to an identification of *shuroyo* with the word *şawroyo*, meaning 'a native of Şawro', thus interpreting *Beth Shuroye* as 'House of Men of Şawro', because the Founder, Samuel, was from Eshtin in the region of Şawro.¹¹ This is certainly too far-fetched.¹² But if the Syrians went to such lengths of sophistry and thus apparently rejected the obvious meaning of 'beginning', what right have we to claim plausibility for it?

We are thus driven back to the interpretation which connects *Beth Shuroye* with the juxtaposed *shuro*, 'wall'. The phrase apparently means 'House of the Men of the Wall'. This conclusion has implications. If the abbey was originally called 'monastery of the House of the Men of the Wall', an appellation with a distinctly local flavour and one which has every chance of being genuine, then it is unlikely that there existed at the time in ʿTur ʿAbdin another monastery with an enclosure-wall. (It is useless to designate someone as 'the man with the hat' if there is more than one such man in sight.) The abbey was therefore probably the first enclosed community in ʿTur ʿAbdin. The significance of the enclosure for Pachomius, who is credited with its invention in Egypt, was both theological and disciplinary.¹³ Both aspects will emerge in the discussion of monasticism in the next chapter, where I shall also explore the psychological dimension of the concept of a surrounding wall.

d. The 'Temple of Mor Samuel'

If an 'oratory' (*beth şlutho*) is an uncovered area with an apse on the east side, a 'temple' (*hayklo*), by contrast, is certainly roofed. What distinction may have existed between a 'temple' and a 'church' (*i(d)to*) at this date is not yet clear.¹⁴ I retain the distinction in translation. But it should be understood that *hayklo* did not suggest to the Syrian mind a pagan building, although 'temple' may have this association in English.

The Temple of Mor Samuel was built within the enclosure-wall, whereas the oratory

¹¹ This I infer from the use of 'Shuro' as a pseudonym for Şawro in (e.g.) Vat. Syr. MS 166, fol. 353b. This MS of the continuation of *Chr. Gregory II* breaks off shortly after the death of the patriarch John bar Shayallah in 1493. The scribe accuses 'Hisho', the 'bishop of Shuro', of poisoning the late patriarch. Now, according to a note in Paris Syr. MS 226 (Zotenberg, *MSS Paris*, pp. 173-4), which was written at the monastery of Mor Abay, the patriarch Ignatius Joshua, who was consecrated on 26 August 1509 had previously been the resident bishop in the monastery of Mor Abay, i.e. bishop of Şawro (cf. Ch. I, n. 17). It seems that the scribe of the Vatican MS was writing after 1509 and intended his accusation as a dark hint that this Joshua (Yeshu') of Şawro had disposed of the patriarch John in order to become patriarch himself. Such an accusation would have been readily believed after 1517, when Joshua defected to the Muslims (Rosen/Forshall, *MSS London*, p. 89; Wright, *MSS London*, p. 625). Şawro is also called Shuro in *Chr. Gregory III*, coll. 545, 547; cf. Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 186, where the name is misunderstood. The colophon of the Winter Panqitho of the church of the Mother of God at Hah, dated 1842, refers to Qartmin as *dayro d-shuroyo*, 'the monastery of the Şawrite'.

¹² Shura or Sura was the name of Şawro in the ninth century BC (Kessler, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 57-66); the improbable exchangeability of SHIN and ŞODHE is paralleled in *L. Jacob*, fol. 178a.2 (summary, p. 9), which gives Shiloh as the ancient name of Şalah, but this is probably a late assimilation of the name with that of the biblical pool of Shiloah; it seems just possible that this ancient name was still current at the time of Samuel of Eshtin, but in view of vi.8 and *L. Daniel*, fol. 98a.2 (summary, p. 60), it is unlikely.

¹³ H. Torp, in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 76 (1964), pp. 178-88.

¹⁴ Cf. Budge, in *Thomas of Marga*, II (1893), pp. 405-6 note; the fortieth canon of Cyriac (AD 794) seems to imply that 'temples' (*haykle*) were for regular prayers, whereas the 'church' (*i(d)to*) was for the Eucharist on Sundays and feast-days: priests serving in 'temples' are required to keep them closed on such days and to repair with the whole population of the place to the 'catholic church' (*Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 15).

apparently constituted a separate walled enclosure. The following section gives more detail as to the location of the former: '[Rumelius] built a great vault to the south of the Temple of Mor Samuel; and they dug two pits (cisterns), both large and deep, to north and to east of the Temple; lastly they built a large dome to the south of the Temple and of the Great Vault' (xxvii.16-19). This description confirms the impression, given by the order of the narrative, that the temple was built before the benefaction of the emperors Honorius and Arcadius; it was therefore built before the death of Samuel.

It may seem strange to us that a church should be placed 'under the invocation' of a holy man during his own lifetime. We are more familiar with the idea of a patron saint in heaven. Whether the monks of the abbey were 'anticipating' in the way this suggests, or understood this kind of church-naming in a different way is difficult to say. But there is no reason to suppose that the appellation is an anachronism in our text. Parallels can be found, notably in the *Life* of Daniel of Aghlosh, a younger contemporary of Samuel, who lived in the same limestone massif. Towards the end of Daniel's life, his son and disciple Lazarus conceived the idea of building a temple in his father's name and a 'house for his bones', 'that the peoples might obtain a blessing from them'. Clearly, he at least was anticipating his father's 'canonization', though this process probably did not need official church authority, depending rather on popular belief. So Lazarus spent two years with a group of brothers fund-raising in the Mediterranean area and returned with much gold. Some of it he used to make a splendid cross and the rest he invested in a temple built of hewn stone, huge and solid. The demons tried to pull it down, but Daniel himself commanded them to put the stones back where they belonged. Whoever wrote this (the manuscripts claim that the author was Jacob of Serugh) saw no incongruity in the fact that a temple was built in Daniel's name during his lifetime.¹⁵

In searching for possible remains of the Temple of Samuel at the abbey our best guide is the fact that there were two cisterns to east and to north of it. The vault and the dome may have disappeared, but it is less likely that the cisterns were filled in. Now there is a building which seems to have been a church, to the east of which is the so-called Cistern of the Star (*gubo d-kawko*), while to the north there is another cistern, the opening of which is opposite the postern gate of the present enclosure. There is no other eligible building in a similar position. Moreover, it is connected with two rows of arches parallel to its south side which run some way beyond its west end. These may be a remnant of the Great Vault.

This ruined church (fig. 12) is now called '*i(d)to d-mor shem'un qartminoyo*', 'the church of Mor Simeon the Qartminite'. Simeon was the disciple and successor of Samuel, who, as second abbot, presided over the first flowering of the community. The abbey was known for many centuries after him, the name of Samuel being preserved by tradition as the founder, but the name of Simeon being adopted to designate the abbey.¹⁶ Probably the Temple of Samuel became at Simeon's death the 'Temple of Mor Samuel and Mor Simeon', and just as Simeon's name eclipsed that of his master in the title of the abbey, so he took over the sole invocation of the church.

The building which we may now with some confidence call the Temple of Mor Samuel (figs. 11 and 12) abuts the modern abbey near its southernmost corner, so that

¹⁵ *L. Daniel*, fol. 101a.3-b.1; summary, p. 62 (paraphrased).

¹⁶ See Ch. 3, n. 2.



Fig. 12. Ruin datable to the fifth century, now called the 'church of Mor Simeon the Qartminite'.

the wall on the south-western side of the enclosure blocks¹⁷ the two arches at the eastern limit of the ruined church. What lay beyond this point and, more specifically, whether there was a distinct sanctuary area at the east end of the church, is unknown. The absence of a central archway at that end might indicate that there was not. The structure as it now remains is very modest, both in size and form. The exterior is invisible on the western and northern sides because of about three metres of accumulated rubble and earth, itself a testimony to the great age of the building. On the south side it adjoins a part of the ruins which was recently cleared and renovated and beyond which the ground falls away gradually. The interior of the 'temple' has been partially cleared of rubble, but it seems likely that the floor level is still several feet deep.

At the west end are two arches, constructed of eight to twelve blocks of somewhat irregular length, which rest on the walls themselves at either side of the 'temple' and on shaped capitals supported by a solid pier in the centre. These arches are partially blocked with secondary masonry, but the building may once have been open on this side. The north wall stands behind a row of three slightly lower arches, each constructed of four to six blocks of very irregular length which are shaped to form a perfect curve. Between this arch and the next is a fragmentary cross engraved in the face of a stone which may or may not have been built into the original wall. The form of the cross is similar to that on the lintel of the Great Temple, which dates from the early sixth century and in turn resembles that on a lintel of the monastery of Mor Daniel of Aghlosh. Somewhat developed forms of the same cross are found on the lintel of the House of Saints (*beth qadishe*) in the monastery of Theodotos of Amida near Qelesh, dated to the late seventh century and in the mid-eighth-century church at Salah (fig. 13).

The south side of the 'temple' has a row of three arches of similar construction to those on the north, except that the westernmost arch is raised above its capital on further blocks of stone and so overtops the others. This arch seems to have formed an entrance. The combined thickness of the walls and the arches on the north and south sides of the 'temple' suggest that it was vaulted.

3. The first imperial benefaction

Up to this point nothing we have learned about Samuel of Eshtin or about the monastery he founded near Qartmin has suggested that the small community was known beyond the confines of Tur 'Abdin. Nor do we have more than a vague idea as to the date of the foundation, since the passage in which a date is given (xx. 15–xxi. 1) is self-contradictory and probably belongs to the category of secondary accretions due to one or more later reworkings of the authentic tradition.

Then, suddenly, in section 15, we are told that this local monastic conglomeration, whose only distinction, as far as we have yet discovered, was that of being the first walled monastery in its area, came to the attention of the emperors of the Roman world, Honorius (emperor of the West 395–423) and Arcadius (emperor of the East 395–408). These emperors, it is claimed, sent the 'chief eunuch of the king' (that is, of Arcadius), whose name was Rumelius, with gold to build further structures and dig further cisterns

¹⁷ The foundations of the new building on this side have covered the eastern arches.

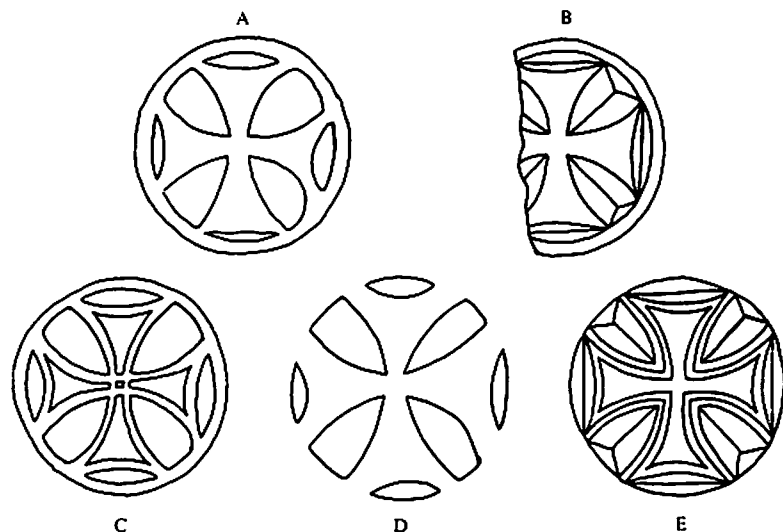


Fig. 13. A. Sixth-century cross on lintel of conventual church, Qartmin; B. Fragmentary cross immured in the 'Church of Mor Simeon of Qartmin'; C. Cross on lintel of burial chamber at monastery of Theodotos near Qeleth, late seventh century; D. Cross on lintel, monastery of Mor Daniel of Aghlosh, ?fifth century; E. Cross in antechapel of conventual church of Mor Jacob near Şalah, ?eighth century

at the abbey. They followed up this benefaction with yearly grants and the gift of liturgical vestments of great value. The income was used to buy food for the community, oil for the lamps, candles, and suchlike necessities. We are bound to ask some assurance that this remarkable report is true. It was not unusual for Christian emperors to be the benefactors of individual monasteries, but the remote situation of Qartmin and its recent emergence would invest such a benefaction with special significance if it actually took place.¹⁸

The lines concerning the relationship of the mother of Honorius and Arcadius with 'Maximus and Domatius, sons of King Valentius' (xxvii.11-13) were written by someone who knew the Syriac text entitled 'the Story of the Roman saints, the sons of King Valentius (*sic*), Maximus and Dometius (*var.* Demetrius)'. This itself goes back to a story told by 'the abbot Vitimius' concerning Abba Macarius. It is entirely legendary and probably late in origin.¹⁹ Prosopographical research would be a waste of time in this connection. Actually, the offending lines appear to be an interpolation in our text, to judge by the syntax and the repetition of the names 'Arcadius and Honorius'.

Arcadius and Honorius are commemorated in the *Calendar of Tur Abdin*.²⁰ The only

¹⁸ In the last quarter of the fifth century, Zeno cultivated relations with upper-Tigris monasteries: *Lett. Philox.* G. 1, p. 158; *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. 558 (in the latter case with the gift of a village).

¹⁹ Edited by F. Nau in *PO* 5.5 (1910), pp. 344-58, with the introduction, pp. 342-3; traced to *Patrologia Graeca* 65, cols. 273-8 and 34, cols. 253-7. ²⁰ *Cal. TA*, 10 Nov.



Fig. 14. Ruins to the east of the conventual church at Qartmin

other emperors there mentioned are Theodosius II (13 Oct., 18 Dec.) and Anastasius (30 Jul.), who are also recorded as benefactors in the *Qartmin Trilogy* (xxx.13f; lviii.17f). Their names are written, moreover, in the *Book of Life* of the abbey.²¹ These two compilations are generally reliable and were not apparently subject to the direct influence of our text. All the same, it could conceivably be argued that the commemorations were invented on the basis of a legend.

The best evidence that what we have here is an authentic tradition concerning a benefaction by Honorius and Arcadius is the lack of sensationalism and the sobriety of detail in the account. As with the record concerning the first cistern, there is no intrusion of drama, human or supernatural, to cast suspicion on the historicity of the description; and if the episode had been invented, the forger might have imagined more extravagant 'imperial buildings' than two cisterns, a long vault and a dome, or at least have invested them with more glamour in his description.

Whether Rumelius existed and, if so, what sort of an official he was, must remain uncertain. From the position of the name in the text it seems that this was part of the original record; but it is quite probable that the writer was unclear as to his rank. If he was being accurate, the 'chief eunuch of the King' should mean the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, or the Grand Chamberlain; this would have been one of the most powerful persons in the empire, especially since Arcadius was a weak ruler.²² The conjunction of the names of the two emperors was a feature of all imperial decrees at the time, though only Arcadius can in fact have had an interest in the eastern borderlands.

The silence of the *Chronicle of 819* concerning this benefaction seems at first glance

²¹ *Book of Life*, p. 1.

²² J.B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (1923), I, p. 33.

to invite caution. But this chronicle does not mention the more spectacular benefaction of Anastasius either. Since it can be shown that the latter occurred (Chapter 4), the silence of the chronicler regarding the former has no weight. Instead, it seems to prove that, while this chronicler used an early version of the written tradition concerning the Founders and some other local sources at the abbey, he did not know the building records which our hagiographer incorporated into the developed version of the *Trilogy*. Close study of the *Chronicle of 819* reveals that comprehensiveness was not among the writer's aims.

On balance, then, the benefaction appears genuine. This is a surprising conclusion, and one which should be backed up with some plausible explanation. The gift of a village to a monastery near Amida by the emperor Zeno is the only comparable benefaction in this region and period.²³ The benefaction of Constantine to the Abbey of the Conduit of Mor Aaron in the upper Euphrates region is a fiction, probably inspired by our text.²⁴ An alleged series of monastic benefactions by Anastasius amounts to no more than the loan of a leaf from the history of the abbey to cover the historical nakedness of other monasteries in the region.²⁵ It is true that Theodosius II ordered Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa, to convert a Jewish synagogue into the Church of St Stephen in 411/12 and presumably sent some gold to help him to do this.²⁶ But such a political act in such a city is not comparable with our case. What it does show is that the emperor was sufficiently interested and informed about Edessa to issue a specific decree concerning an ecclesiastical building there. As the chief city of Mesopotamia, Edessa was naturally in the imperial eye. But what was it about Qartmin that brought it to the special attention of Arcadius?

The answer must be that its situation near the south-eastern escarpment of the plateau of Tur 'Abdin, after the cession of Nisibis the foremost bulwark of the empire against Persia and the chief defence of Amida, somehow made it eligible for this grant. But what is the connection between a community of monks and the defence of the frontier? It lies, surely, in the belief, shared at that time by emperor, soldier and peasant, that prayer has the power to ward off invaders and that righteousness and victory go hand in hand.²⁷

²³ See n. 18, above. In Palestine, however, the monastery of Saba received imperial funds with which to build a fort for its protection, which would contain a garrison maintained at the public expense (W. Liebeschuetz, in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* 2 (1977), p. 493 n. 65, referring to Cyril of Scythopolis, *vita Sabae*, p. 178); and the 'fortress' built by Justinian at Mount Sinai had a garrison for the protection of the monks (Procopius, *Buildings*, v.8, sceptically evaluated by Mayerson in *Bulletin of the American Society of Oriental Research* 230 (1978), pp. 33f).

²⁴ *Leg. Aaron*, pp. 329–30; the contacts between the monastery of Aaron and that of Qartmin and the literary relationship of their patronal *Lives* are discussed in A. Palmer, 'Charting Undercurrents', in *OC* 70 (1986), pp. 51–64.

²⁵ Baršawn, *Histoire du couvent de S. Hanania* (1917), pp. 44–5, from a MS of 1592 (Syriac and Garshuni) which belonged to a Syrian Orthodox house in Diyarbakir: 'All the churches of Tur 'Abdin were built by Anastasius: the dome of the Saffron [Monastery] and the temple (*hayklo*) of Salah and the temple of Mor Abraham at Midyat and the temple of [Mor John of] Kfone and the church (*'i(d)lo*) of Armas and that of Kfarze and the temple of the Monastery of the Cross of Hesno d-Kifo; and the sons of Shufnay were the craftsmen, Theodosius and Theodorus.' *Hayklo* here has the meaning of 'monastic church' (cf. note 14 above); that of Salah is dated by *INSCR.* B.1 to the mid-eighth century! On the 'sons of Shufnay', see *LIX*, 6–15 with the commentary on that passage in Ch. 3; they were architects, not craftsmen.

²⁶ *Chr. Edessa* 540, AG 723.

²⁷ The request of a Palestinian abbot under Anastasius for a garrisoned fort to protect his monastery (see n. 23) is, to be sure, an indication that more realistic attitudes coexisted with this belief.

Procopius tells how 'a certain righteous man of the Syrians called Jacob', whose hermitage was a day's journey away from Amida at a place called *Endiēlon*, mightily impressed the Persian shah Kawad by rendering a band of barbarian raiders immobile when they attempted to shoot arrows at him. When he had released them 'with a single word' in the presence of the shah, who had come specially to see this miracle, Kawad granted Jacob his request, that all who took refuge with him from the dangers of the current war should have a guarantee of safety.²⁸ Even if this does not in itself show that 'Procopius believed that the prayers of holy men played their part in holding the eastern frontier of the empire',²⁹ such a belief would be a natural extension of his attitude to Jacob.

A very similar passage occurs in the *Life of Simeon*, the second abbot of Qartmin (XLII.4–13). Here the connection between the repellent power of sanctity and the generosity of the Romans to Simeon's monastery is made explicit: 'The Persians stood in awe of the Blessed One and were afraid to come near his cell . . . For this reason, the Romans used to send many gifts to this holy place.'

Even if we harbour reservations about the influence of such beliefs on imperial policy and military strategy, suspecting that, even in that age, the harsh realities of experience counted for more with the emperor's tactical advisers, we may see the benefaction to Qartmin both as a 'secondary insurance policy', backing up the military defences, and as a political move, designed to strengthen the morale of the peasant population of Tur 'Abdin by showing them that the holy men to whom they looked for protection in matters of sanity, health and agriculture were also valued by the emperor for their spiritual contribution to the security of the frontier. At the same time, more cynically, we might see this as an attempt to take advantage of the awed respect with which the peasant regarded the early monks by obliging the monks to demonstrate their solidarity with their secular rulers in a specifically Christian context, namely by a liturgical commemoration. This would not fail to reinforce the loyalty of the peasantry, which in a frontier region was as vital as it was subject to erosion under the threat of insecurity. With far-flung garrisons in need of essential supplies and legions which had to be supplemented and serviced by local manpower, the Romans would have exposed a vulnerable belly to widespread disaffection at ground-level.

To what extent Roman presence in the area effectively added to the burdens borne by the farmers of Tur 'Abdin is not explicitly documented. Even in less militarized areas the taxation system of the fourth and fifth centuries reduced farmers throughout the empire to little more than serfdom, a predicament which could only be improved by the total loss of freedom, in that the burden of taxation then fell on the owner of the land as lord of the *coloni*.³⁰ Presumably whatever demands were made by the military authorities in Tur 'Abdin and its environs were added to the normal requirements imposed by the state on the land. The billeting of troops was to some extent alleviated by the institution of *limitanei*, a class of frontier troops with estates of their own, granted in return for their services in defence;³¹ but these grants of land were probably made at the expense of local farmers.

²⁸ Procopius, *Wars*, I.7.5–11.

²⁹ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), p. 145.

³⁰ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), pp. 808–12; cf. *Chr. Amida* 569, vii.6, p. 36 line 7.

³¹ Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 649–54, 661–3, 669–72; MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (1963), Ch. 1; A. R. Neumann, art. 'Limitanei', in *Pauly Suppl.* xi (1968), cols. 875–88; W. Liebeschuetz, in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* 2 (1977), pp. 487–99.

Two hagiographical sources from Ṭur 'Abdin give some insight into the Roman presence there. In the *Life of Jacob of Ṣalaḥ* we read of Jacob's arrival in Amida and of his meeting with Barshabo, the superior of a small monastery called Shurgin in Ṭur 'Abdin, in the house of Anthimus, a relative of the emperor Theodosius, who was the governor (*arkhōn*) of Amida. Barshabo is represented as using his familiar standing with Anthimus to allow Jacob to join his ten disciples in the monastery. Anthimus had a brother, Rufus, who was the governor (*arkhōn*) of Ḥesno d-Kifo, that is, the fort of Kēphas on the Tigris. This Rufus offered to go down with them to the monastery, since it was near his castle. On a later occasion he visited Jacob there, accompanied by Benjamin, the bishop of Kēphas.³²

The two of them visited Jacob again on the occasion of a scandal in the village of 'Shiloah' (= Ṣalaḥ), where Jacob had settled. A Roman soldier called *GWSN* (Gawson?), a very wealthy man, who lived in the village, had a daughter who slept with his servant Decius and conceived a child. The girl tried to put the blame on Jacob's disciple Holo, who had offended her by rejecting her amorous advances. But, by a miracle, the truth came to light and the adulterers were stoned to death by the command of the governor Rufus in a dry cistern. The cistern was known in the writer's time as 'Decius' Pit'. As for the girl's father, he was expelled from the village and went down to the plain to the north (on the far side of the Tigris?), where he founded a village in his own name, Kfar Gawson.³³ The time at which all this is supposed to have happened can be approximately judged from the date of Jacob's death, shortly afterwards, in 421.³⁴

The other source is the *Life of Aḥo*, whose birth is said to have occurred before the middle of the fifth century and who lived (so it is claimed) 105 years.³⁵ Aḥo came upon a rich Roman called Maximius, living in a village not far from the Persian border on the south side of the river Arsenias. Here, also, there was a scandal involving a beautiful woman; Aḥo was received by Drusilla, the wife of Maximius, alone in her house in perfect innocence, but for a while Maximius believed the calumny of an evil-minded maid and clapped the holy man in jail. Afterwards, however, he became devoted to him.³⁶ When Aḥo, together with his lay patron Theodore and his disciple Heworo built a monastery in the thickly wooded southern part of Ṭur 'Abdin and called it the abbey of Bnoyel, meaning 'God-built', a certain Roman called Demetrius, who was posted at the castle of Ṭur 'Abdin to the south-east of the monastery, made a benefaction to it, in order that there should be built in his memory a burial vault of hewn stone containing nine *arcosolia*, and a charnel-house with a stone door.³⁷

From these texts we gain some understanding of the realities of the time and of the steps by which the abbey of Qartmin might have come to the attention of the emperor Arcadius. Some villages in the frontier area were inhabited by *limitanei*, a landed frontier militia, probably of foreign extraction, who seemed wealthy by local standards, although in fact they were of inferior status in the army. Gawson and Maximius were

³² *L. Jacob*, foll. 176b.2-177a.3; summary, pp. 6-8.

³³ *L. Jacob*, foll. 179b.2-180a.2; summary, pp. 10-11.

³⁴ *L. Jacob*, fol. 180b.3; summary, p. 11.

³⁵ *L. Aho*, foll. 176a, 177a, 190b; cf. Vööbus, *Aha*, pp. 9-10.

³⁶ *L. Aho*, foll. 185a-b, 186b-187a; cf. Assemani, *MSS Vatican*, II, p. 249.

³⁷ *L. Aho*, fol. 184a; cf. Vööbus, *Aha*, pp. 25-6. The word translated as '*arcosolia*' is '*arsotho*', 'beds' (cf. xxxi.18).

two such; but if the militia was of an appreciable size the pattern must have been a general one. (*Limitanei* called Constans and Severianus may have founded the villages of Beth Qusṭan and Beth Svirina in Ṭur 'Abdin.) Inevitably they came into contact with the holy men who lived around the village and, if they were sufficiently impressed, they would spread the rumour of them in the military community of the region. The officers and commanders in the nearby forts of Ṭur 'Abdin and of Ḥesno d-Kifo were sometimes interested enough to come out and visit the holy men themselves and even to fund buildings in their monasteries. Through such connections with men like 'Demetrius' and Rufus a monastic superior such as Barshabo could obtain an introduction to the head of the army forces in the region, the governor of Amida. Their familiarity might be such that the monk was invited to lodge for a time in the house of the governor. When such an eminent man as Anthimus was so familiar with the superior of a tiny community in Ṭur 'Abdin, it should cause no amazement that the abbey of Qartmin was noticed in this way and reported to the emperor, who for some reasons as I have mentioned made this important benefaction.

e. The buildings attributed to Honorius and Arcadius

The faithful kings Honorius and Arcadius sent gifts with much gold in the hands of Rumelius, the king's [Arcadius'] chief eunuch, and they arrived at this place and set down in it wealth without end; and he [Rumelius] built a great vault to the south of the Temple of Mor Samuel; and they dug two great, deep pits, one to the north and one to the east of the Temple. Furthermore, they built a great dome to the south of the Temple and the great vault.

(xxvii.13-19)

This passage has already been quoted to situate the Temple of Mor Samuel. If my identification of that building was correct, then the row of arches parallel to the south side of it almost certainly formed one side of the Great Vault. The first two of these arches are placed exactly opposite the two easternmost arches on the south side of the Temple. The wall between has been pierced for a doorway beneath the eastern arch and has either fallen down or been dismantled to half the height of the other arch. Opposite the high arch at the west end of the south side of the temple has been built a vertical-sided corridor which was no doubt roofed over, the other end being crowned by a horizontal lintel-stone.

Beyond this the row of arches continues within a recently restored group of secondary buildings of uncertain date. These arches are blocked up with masonry, the other side of which is a deep layer of earth and rubble. Beyond these, and as far as the enclosure-wall, both this row of arches and a matching row opposite to it have been preserved. The original vault had 19 bays, at least. Not a trace of the 'great dome' has survived above ground; but the ground slopes away on this side of the abbey and it is likely that the present driveway was levelled above further ruins.

For some reason the writer of this record declined to explain the function of any of these buildings. The commentary on fig. 28 suggests a function to which the Great Vault was put at a later date. It is possible that the dome was a baptistery;³⁸ and if the pits were intended as additional cisterns to meet the needs of an expanding community, the vault

³⁸ cf. the discussion at the end of Ch. 4.

may have been a kind of extension of the temple, to accommodate greater numbers at prayer (fig. 11).

Just to the north of the 'Temple of Mor Samuel' are the remains of two piers constructed of brick masonry which were evidently part of a row of large and high brick arches. One of these arches was still standing in 1909 with the wall between it and the 'temple' and a part of the 'inner wall' which filled the interstice between the arches; Gertrude Bell's photograph is published by Marlia Mango under the title 'Church of Mar Shim'un'.³⁹ Bell herself seems vague about the exact location of the church of Mor Simeon the Qartminite,⁴⁰ but the present inhabitants of the abbey identify it with the building which I have described as the 'Temple of Mor Samuel'. Beyond this, only conjecture is possible. If the brick arches in fact belonged to the 'temple', then the building I have described under that title is part of the Great Vault, which must then be conceived of as a complex unity. This would explain the similarity of form in its two parts, but the similarity can equally be attributed to the builders of the 'Temple' having gone on without a break to construct the vault. If, on the other hand, the brick arches belong to another building not mentioned in our sources, might this not be a church built for Mor Simeon beside that of his master Samuel? The community seems to have swollen dramatically in Simeon's time and this might explain the construction of a much bigger church, although two extra churches had already been provided by Theodosius II, as we shall see in a moment.

The importance of the benefaction for the date of the foundation

The sources which were consulted for an insight into the contacts between holy men and the Roman military authorities do not have impeccable credentials; they are far from being contemporary biographies of the men concerned. With the various literary embellishments and legendary accretions certain anachronisms and historical absurdities were introduced.⁴¹ Yet, as in the case of the *Life of Samuel*, a core of authentic traditions can be discerned. Not all of the material brought to bear on our question necessarily belonged to that core, but the existence of the authentic tradition should make us more willing to give it the benefit of the doubt.⁴² To take a more negative view would simply throw us back on pure conjecture; as it is we have a guide which is at least plausible and which may be true.

These sources cast some light on the way in which a small monastic community could come to the attention of important men in the regional administration. This would

³⁹ Bell/Mango, *T.4*, pl. 209. ⁴⁰ Bell/Mango, *T.4*, p. 6. ⁴¹ cf. Vööbus, *Aha*, pp. 25–6.

⁴² In *L. Aho*, the description of the natural disasters which caused Tur 'Abdin to become virtually deserted (fol. 190b–191a) may well correspond to those recorded in the chronicles (Vööbus, *Aha*, pp. 10–11 with n. 10) and there are many other aspects of the text which recommend it historically (cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 193). In *L. Jacob*, the record concerning Constantius' construction of forts in Tur 'Abdin (Wright, *MSS London*, p. 1136; *L. Jacob*, fol. 177a.2; summary, p. 7) has found general acceptance with historians of the eastern frontier (Honigsmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches* (1935), pp. 4–5 (incorrect translation on p. 5 line 1)); C. Lightfoot, 'The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire', unpublished doctoral thesis (Oxford, 1981), p. 75 n. 18, p. 86, and the narrative concerning Anthimus, Rufus (Anthemius, Rufinus?) and Bishop Benjamin seems plausible, although the relationship between the two 'brothers' and the emperor may be more symbolic than real.

doubtless have been the channel which led on up to the emperor's ear. The community of Samuel of Eshtin had acquired considerable proportions, in comparison with that of Barshabo at Shurgin, and had erected an enclosure which was something of a novelty in the region, before the decree went out from the throne to supply it with funds. The actual arrival of Samuel and Simeon on the site of the future abbey must therefore be dated some years before the reign of Arcadius (395–408). Even if the benefaction occurred towards the end of that reign (which might contradict xxviii.1 by implication), it is impossible that only a decade passed between the original settlement of hermits and the imperial decree. The *Chronicle of 819* records the finding of 483 skulls in the burial vault at Qartmin as early as the year 443/4.

A later hand has interpolated an exact date into the foundation legend, purporting to mark the moment at which Samuel and Simeon began to build their *beth slutho* or oratory:

They set to and began with the building of the abbey in the year seven hundred and eight of Alexander, son of Philip first king of the Greeks (AD 396/7), when Arcadius Caesar held the chief place in the kingdom of Constantinople, while Honorius was king of the Romans. (xx. 15–18)

A further interpolation synchronizes this wrongly with the reigns of Cyril of Alexandria and Celestine of Rome, which coincided between 422 and 432. The tertiary nature of this synchronism is betrayed by the words: 'This being the date at which this holy abbey began to be built' (xx. 19), which repeat the sense of part of the preceding passage.⁴³

The synchronism with Cyril and Celestine was added as a literary flourish, giving spurious historical colouring in a manner paralleled elsewhere in our text.⁴⁴ We need only consider seriously the date 396/7. This is found also in the *Chronicles*.⁴⁵ That of 819 reads as follows: 'In the year 708 the monastery of Qartmin was built by Samuel, the first abbot, and his disciple Simeon, to whom an angel showed the outline and the measurement of the foundations.'

The *Chronicle of 846*, which derives its notices on Qartmin from that of 819, here surprises us by claiming more specific knowledge of the foundation date. It was 'one year and ten months before' the consecration of John Chrysostom.⁴⁶ This is such an exact interval that the only explanation for its introduction by the *Chronicle of 846* is a (lost) liturgical commemoration of the 'foundation' of Qartmin by Honorius and Arcadius in the month of April. The chronicler of 846 probably knew that Chrysostom was consecrated in February and his interval is calculated on the basis of two false dates present in the Syrian chronographical tradition: the beginning of the reign of Arcadius and Honorius in AG 708⁴⁷ (whence the 'foundation date' of Qartmin) and the consecration of Chrysostom in AG 710.

If the date of the foundation in the *Chronicle of 819* was derived from a liturgical commemoration mentioning the benefaction of Arcadius and Honorius, the question arises: why did that chronicle not record this benefaction? Perhaps the calendar entry

⁴³ Capizzi, *L'imperatore Anastasio I* (1969), p. 221, bases his theory, that the 'Great Temple' of Anastasius was just a completion of Arcadius' building programme, on a misleading passage (fol. 50a–b) in the *Berlin Paraphrase*. ⁴⁴ LXXII.3–6. ⁴⁵ Including *Chr. Gregory II*, cols. 119, 121, on which see p. 159.

⁴⁶ *Chr. 'Harran' 846*, p. 207. ⁴⁷ *Chr. Michael 1195*, VIII.1a, p. 163.

was written in such a way as to obscure the fact of the benefaction: 'Qartmin Abbey was built in the days of Honorius and Arcadius' or some such phrase. But the omission of all the imperial benefactions from the *Chronicle of 819* is in any case a mystery.

4. The benefaction of Theodosius II

The same terse and sober style as recommended the two previous building records in sections 14 and 15 also characterizes section 18 of the *Life of Samuel*, though it gives a little more detail and adds one or two enthusiastic adjectives. There is nothing here to excite critical suspicion, and since authentic building records were available to our writer in those former sections, it is no surprise to find a sequel to them.

This further imperial benefaction occurred in 408/9, the first year of Theodosius' reign, when he was still a minor, so it should probably be seen as a formal reaffirmation of Arcadius' policy. The name of Honorius is not here linked with that of his co-emperor, but that may be because the original decree was deemed to associate him permanently with this policy, the continuity of which was assured by yearly grants. Theodosius' regent marked his accession by funding a further building programme at the abbey. We are left to assume that the yearly grants continued. Significantly, Theodosius' successor Marcian, who called the Council of Chalcedon and instructed his representatives to ensure an outcome contrary to the cause espoused by the monks of Mesopotamia,⁴⁸ is not on record as reaffirming his predecessors' policy towards the abbey. The benefactions were apparently interrupted until the reign of Anastasius.

Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the Theodosian buildings at Qartmin (Vööbus has even carelessly transplanted them to Hah⁴⁹). Securely dated buildings of the early fifth century are not so common in Christian Mesopotamia to justify such neglect, which some attempt must be made here to remedy, taking each of the buildings in turn.

f. The 'House of Eternity'

'They built a round House of Eternity, that is, a House of Saints' (XXXI.15-16). *Beith 'olmo* or 'House of Eternity' is an ancient Aramaic word for a sepulchre, which is found in pagan contexts at Edessa and Palmyra. It is not common in Christian texts: Payne Smith's *Thesaurus* refers only to the *Acts of Thecla* and John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. After the sixth century it does not seem to have been used. That apparently confirms the early date of this passage in our text.

In the context of a belief in universal resurrection the term 'House of Eternity' acquired a different meaning: for the saints, entry into that house marked the inception of eternal life, in a sense both more perfect and more final than the initiation of baptism.

⁴⁸ The emperor's intention is revealed both in the correspondence between Theodoret and leading officers of state in the months before the council and the clearly biased and summary conduct of those same officers led by count Anatolius, as 'arbitrators' at the council itself: such is the tenor of a paper read at Oxford by G.E.M. de Ste Croix; cf. de Sainte Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981), pp. 403-4. ⁴⁹ Vööbus, *Assecliam*, II, p. 173 n.6, equating the small 'monastery' (*dayro*) of Mor Samuel at Hah with the abbey ('*amro*, sc. of Qartmin) with which the next paragraph begins, but correctly in Villard, *Le chiese della Mesopotamia* (1940), p. 56 and Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 280 n.7.

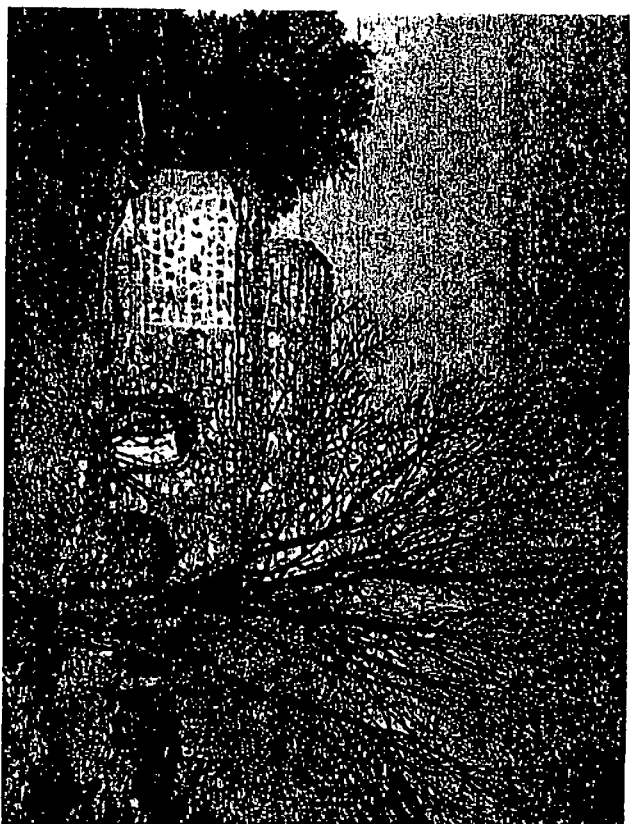


Fig. 15. The sepulchre called the 'Dome of the Egyptians', Qartmin

At the same time, baptism and burial are directly analogous in Christian theology. This is why baptisteries were usually built in the form of *tumuli*.⁵⁰

There are two free-standing sepulchres on the north-western side of the present monastic complex at Qartmin: the 'Dome of the Egyptians' and the 'Dome of the Departed' (figs. 15 to 18), which could in a sense be described as 'round'.⁵¹ They have domes constructed on an octagon of arches. But the roundness is disguised on the outside by a square encasing structure which makes room at the corners for deeper, rounded recesses behind four of the arches. Even the domes have now been roofed over with flat roofs.⁵²

According to the *Life of Gabriel* (LXXXVIII.1-2), 'the round House of Tombs of the House of Saints of this abbey was cleared out' in the year of Gabriel's death (648)⁵³ and 'there were found in it 800 skulls'. In all probability this was the Theodosian sepulchre.

⁵⁰ See the documentation at the end of Ch. 4.

⁵¹ The great octagon near the conventual church is described as 'round' (LXXII.20), although it has a cubic exterior.

⁵² Gertrude Bell's photograph shows that the 'Dome of the Egyptians' was once roofed in an approximately pyramidal way and only later encased in a square structure with a flat roof, leaving a wide rim of flat roof like a step on a lower level. An intermediate 'stepped' structure, preceding the present cubic exterior, is seen on the 'Dome of the Departed' in the picture on p. 239 of Dolabani's *History of Qartmin* (1959), though there both roofs are sloping, the upper one being shaped like a pyramid. It is impossible to tell how the domes were originally roofed.

⁵³ For the emended date, see pp. 156-57.

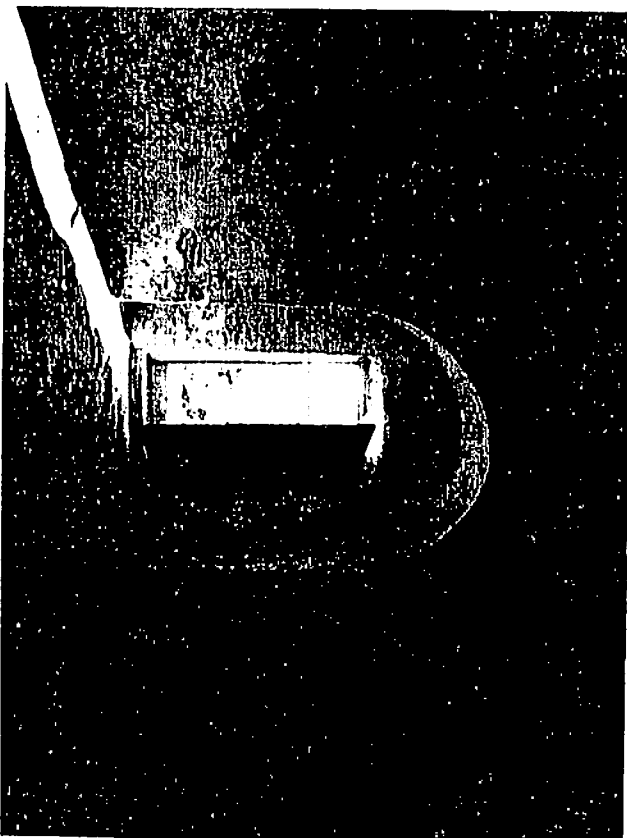


Fig. 16. Interior of the 'Dome of the Egyptians'

The two domed sepulchres are so similar in structure that they might easily be contemporary. On the other hand, one may be a later copy of the other. Unless the 'round House of Eternity' disappeared without a trace and was replaced at a much later date by these two domes, the fact that it is referred to in the singular in 408/9 and in 648 obliges us to regard one of the sepulchres as a copy.

The 'Dome of the Egyptians' seems the obvious choice for the earlier building, because it is near the burial vault and the other buildings constructed under Theodosius II. Besides, as its name suggests, it has an ancient legend attached to it, whereas none of our sources has any word for the 'Dome of the Departed'.

The legend of the Egyptians was inspired partly by the relationship between the monks of Tur Abdin and the Fathers of the Egyptian desert – a relationship fostered by pilgrimage from the early centuries and projected into the remote past through the legendary Egyptian ancestry of several monastic founders in the neighbourhood of Tur Abdin – and partly by the '800 skulls' of the record in the *Life of Gabriel*. 'The eight hundred triumphant Egyptians who came to [this abbey] and in it ended their lives' struggle' (XCI. 19–XCII. 1) are already found in the London manuscript of that *Life*, which is probably of the thirteenth century. This is slightly expanded in Br. Lib. Add. MS 17, 231, dated 1484:

From the solitaires of the Egyptian desert – Skele and the Thebaid – of Abba Shenudin, there came to the abbey by divine revelation eight hundred perfect and godly men, who also went to sleep and took their rest in the abbey.

(fol. 150a)

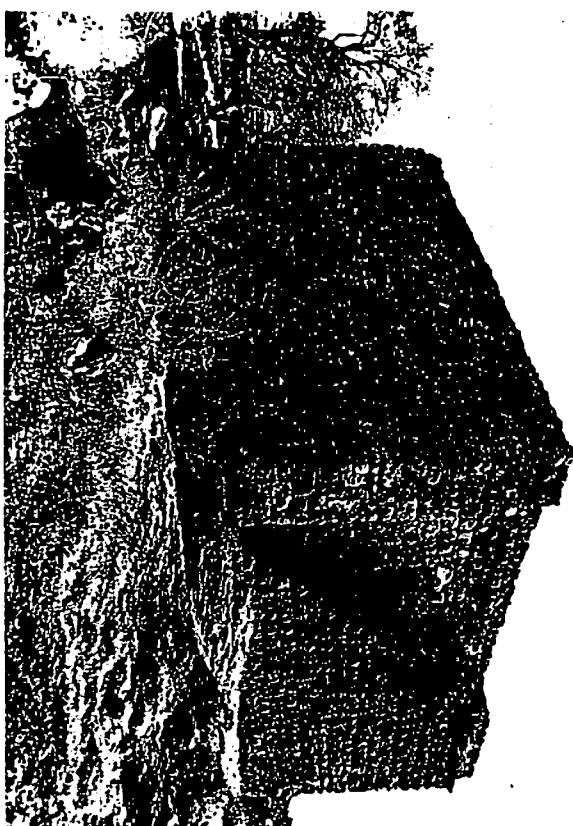


Fig. 17. The sepulchre called the 'Dome of the Departed', Qartmin

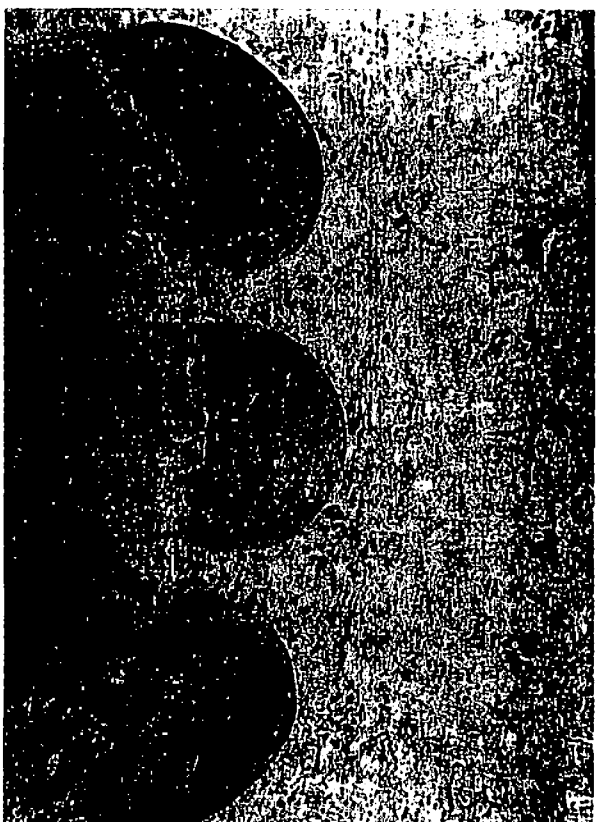


Fig. 18. Interior of the 'Dome of the Departed'

The full story of the Egyptians and their burial in the sepulchre which bears their name is not told until 1710, when the following account was written in the *Berlin Paraphrase* (foll. 86b–88a):

Hearing of the fame and the miracles of the abbey, 800 Egyptian princes came as pilgrims to see it, bearing gifts of gold. When they saw it and the stone suspended in the air,⁵⁴ they all became monks and sold their horses and used their gold and silver to build themselves cells. Soon their asceticism made them great healers and exorcists. They built themselves a dome, for which they made fine doors.⁵⁵ Inside they put many hanging lamps. They instructed the other monks to bury them all in this sepulchre; and so it came to pass. Afterwards there died two monks who had been disciples of the Egyptians and before their death they asked to be buried with their masters. Their bodies were duly placed in the dome and the community began the seven days of prayer which custom prescribes before a burial. But the next day, when they came with incense to pray for them, the two monks were lying in the yard in front of the dome. That night the Egyptians appeared to one of the monks and said to him, 'Please tell your brother-monks to bury those disciples of ours in the yard outside the dome. That is our will; for we are the 800 Egyptians and no addition or subtraction can be made from our number, nor will we allow anyone from this country to mix with us.' So that is what the monks did; and the dome is called 'dome of the Egyptians' to this very day.

The *Chronicle of 819* records the cleaning of a sepulchre, called *beth qvuro*, 'House of Burial', at the abbey 'in the days of Mor Gabriel, bishop of Dara and abbot of Qartmin'.⁵⁶ The date, which is obscured by a lacuna, was apparently 643/4 and the number of skulls found is given as 82. Later someone wrote in the margin 'eight hundred', though whether he meant to substitute this as the whole number or was simply correcting the 'eighty' and meant that the sum was 802 is unclear. It is possible that, rightly or wrongly, the cleaning-out of 643/4 was identified with that ascribed by the *Life of Gabriel* to the year 648, an identification which might have been aided by the lacuna in the *Chronicle of 819*, and that the marginal note was an attempt to harmonize the two. Conceivably the 'two disciples' of the 800 Egyptian monks, whom the legend describes as attempting to add themselves to their number in burial, owe their existence to this ambiguous marginal note.⁵⁷

g. The church of the Mother of God (xxxI.16)

From what follows we learn that this church should be sought on the south side of the burial vault, which, as we shall see, is certainly identical with that which stands now. In this position we find an ancient church, no longer in use, but still called after the Mother of God (fig. 19).⁵⁸ It is entered through a small door in the north wall, within which

⁵⁴ cf. xviii.15–18; O.H. Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (1895), pp. 214–16, has a much-embroidered version of these legends, which explains why the stone was no longer hanging in the air in his day.

⁵⁵ The *Book of Life*, p. 31 records, among other gifts of Bishop Philoxenos Qawme of Beth Svirina (d. 1454/5) 'a door for the dome of the Egyptians'.

⁵⁶ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, p. 11; the lacuna is an odd one, since the text reads: 'In the year 954... and in the year nine [lacuna] and in the next... and in the year 955...'

⁵⁷ The *Book of Life* of the abbey contains a further echo of this legend (p. 4): 'The 800 Egyptian monks and their two disciples, who are buried by the door of the Dome.'

⁵⁸ Bell/Mango, *TA*, pp. 6, 9, 31, 138–9, figs. 5, 19; Villard, *Le chiese della Mesopotamia* (1940), p. 77, fig. 73; the criteria applied by these authors are extremely loose and their late dating of the church is insecurely based.



Fig. 19. The church of the Mother of God: interior. Qartmin, 7th century

three steps lead down to the floor-level. When we consider that the level from which this descent begins is that of the sixth-century buildings of the east end of the abbey, we must treat this as an indication of great antiquity. The other two entrances in the south and west walls of the church were long ago blocked up. Outside them the level of the ground has now reached above the relieving arches over their lintels. The floor of the church is paved with ancient flag-stones.

The nave is roofed with three vaults running from east to west, which are supported by four rows of three arches each. These rest in turn on piers similar in form to those of the 'Temple of Mor Samuel' and of the adjoining 'vault', though they are of greater proportions. The outer rows of arches are joined to outer walls, in the same way as those of the 'temple'. The vaults are constructed in the distinctive thin bricks of the Late Antique period, which continued in use in Tur 'Abdin into the eighth century.⁵⁹ They are barrel-vaults, braced by two brick arches which divide them into three square areas. These areas are spanned with concentric brickwork of chiastic formation. The vaults have been plastered over and it is only where the plaster has fallen away that the brickwork can be seen, but it can safely be assumed elsewhere. For some reason an extra vault has been added later at a lower level between the four central piers at the west end, and extra piers of inferior construction have been built next to these to support it. The plasterwork of this later vault exhibits a curious design, moulded in relief: a right hand

⁵⁹ As in the church at Ṣalab, dated by *INSCRR*. B.1–7.

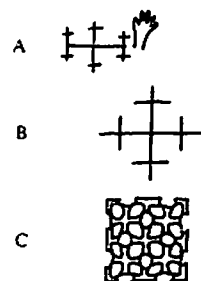


Fig. 20. A. Design with interlocked crosses and outspread fingers moulded on plaster vault in the church of the Mother of God, Qartmin; B. Design of vault in monastery of Mor Malke near Arkah, as described in the sixteenth-century biography of John Bar Shayallah; C. Stone panel carved with interlocking crosses from outer wall of apse, conventual church of Mor Jacob, Şalah, mid-eighth century

with fingers spread and, beside it, a 'cross of crosses', or six crosses joined to form a seventh.⁶⁰

There is a small rectangular slot for a window – above the blocked-up west entrance to the nave – and a larger window, arched over in brick, high up under the vault above the sanctuary entrance in the east wall of the nave. The sanctuary was therefore originally roofed at a lower level, the height of which is perhaps shown by the present ceiling. A flight of stairs in the south chamber of the sanctuary apparently led up onto this lower roof, which may therefore have been flat.

The main entrance to the sanctuary is constructed in the same way as the doors of the nave, with a massive solid lintel the thickness of the wall and an open semicircular relieving arch over that as wide as the rectangular doorway below. There are three steps up from the floor of the nave. On either side of these steps are later structures of stone and mortar, being perhaps a book-cupboard and a lectern for the *husoyo*⁶¹ on the right and a throne for the bishop on the left. Certain fragments of disc-shaped marble blocks are reused here, of which similar remnants are found elsewhere in the abbey. One which has been built into a niche in the sanctuary of the Anastasian church bears a 'runic' inscription (fig. 21), which has not yet been deciphered.⁶² The discs are hollow on one side with a circular rim. There may also have been a central projection on the hollow side. The other side is smooth. I cannot guess for what purpose they were made.

The two side-chambers of the sanctuary also have doors into the nave, the one on the left being arched and of recent reconstruction, together with much of the wall around it, while that on the right is a plain rectangle in a wall built (as far as the plaster covering allows it to be examined) of larger and more credibly ancient blocks of stone. I could not see whether there had once been a relieving arch over the lintel of this door, which was subsequently blocked up and plastered over, but I suspect so. To the left of this door is a masonry sink with a drain, which may be a font.

⁶⁰ L. John bar Shayallah, fol. 85b: the patriarch built at the monastery of Mor Malke in Tur 'Abdin a 'fine chamber, the vault of which he bound together with a cross of crosses, that is, four crosses' (fig. 20).

⁶¹ The *husoyo* is a book of homilies composed around the prayers of propitiation (hence the name) which accompany the burning of incense.

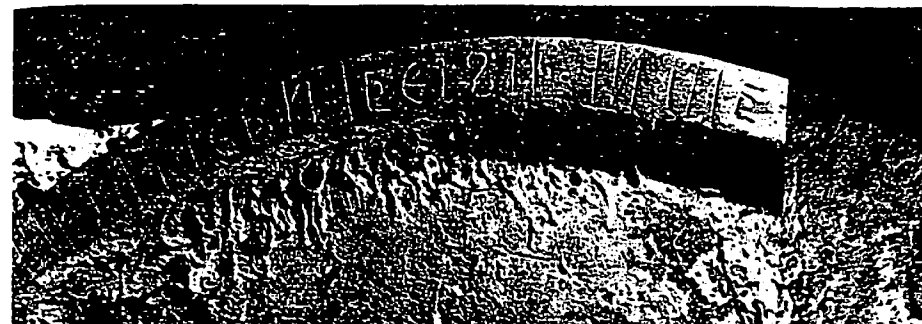


Fig. 21. Undeciphered 'runic' characters inscribed on disc-shaped stone reused as shelf in the main sanctuary, Qartmin

The interior of the sanctuary has been much rebuilt. The wall between the central and the north chamber seems original, and it has a door with a solid horizontal lintel and a relieving arch. But the wall on the other side, between the central chamber and that on the south, is secondary. It was built to enlarge the south chamber at the expense of the central chamber and there is no passage between them. The altars in the north and central chambers (there is none in the south chamber) do not appear to be very old; but the stone tablet on the central altar bearing a beautiful cross (fig. 22) may well be early.

The south wall of the south chamber, above the flight of stone steps which once led onto the roof, is pierced by a tiny window. The east wall has a larger hole in it, through which you can enter what must have been a hermit's cell in the interstice between this building and those to the east of it. From this cell a tunnel leads through the rock underground for 15 metres to the cistern called the 'Pit of the Star'. This gave the hermit a private and suitably mortifying passage to the water-supply.⁶³

I see no reason to doubt that this ancient church was built under Theodosius II, as our text indicates. Gertrude Bell thinks it later than the Anastasian church; but she admits that she has 'no means of dating it' except its slightly more accurate orientation.⁶⁴ It does not seem self-evident that this makes it later, but even if it does, the circumstance might be explained by the fact that the Anastasian church was built 'on the foundations' of the original fourth-century oratory, from which it will thus have derived its orientation to the north of east.⁶⁵ The depth at which the floor is now and the similarity of the piers with those of the 'Temple of Mor Samuel' and the associated Arcadian 'vault' are powerful evidence in favour of an early fifth-century date.

⁶² Sir Harold Bailey's opinion is that they most nearly resemble Turkic runes (personal communication).

⁶³ Compare the 'prisons' described towards the end of Ch. 3. Already in 1909 the church of the Mother of God had acquired an upper storey and the function, as it appears from Gertrude Bell's photograph, of a fortress. The upper storey is still called *hesmo*, 'the fortress'. It is there that the nuns, who have come to the abbey during the last two and a half decades, are housed. Around an unroofed courtyard are the modest buildings in which all the cooking and baking, the washing and the sewing of the modern community is performed. One of these rooms bears an inscription dated 1953. In 1983 a massive extension began to be built on the south side.

⁶⁴ Bell/Mango, *TA*, pp. 9, 13; cf. n. 58.
⁶⁵ LIX.9-10, 15-19; LXI.4-9; cf. Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 41f n.1; E. Heinrich, *Kunst des Orients* I (1950), p. 16.

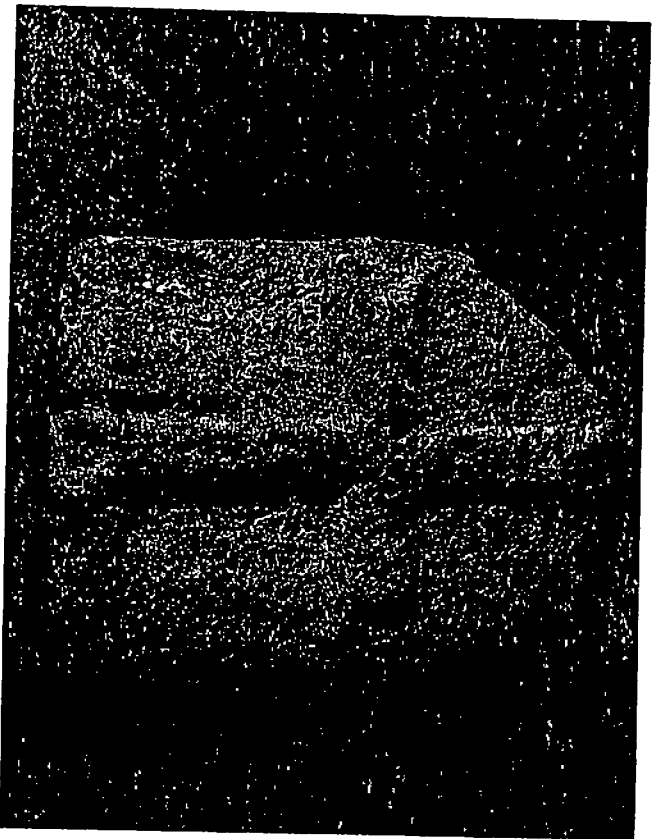


Fig. 22. Stone cross on the altar of the Mother of God, Qartmin (Photo: Berni Larsson)

h. The 'House of Martyrs'

Beside the church to the north a double House of Martyrs, and two vaults constructed of hewn stones, and they erected in it fifteen 'beds'. (XXXI.16-18)

The lowest part of the present burial vaults is clearly to be identified as the 'double House of Martyrs'. It is reached through an antechamber opposite the entrance to the corridor outside. Five further steps lead down to the vaults. The entrance, at the top of these steps, was originally an arch, but the jambs and lintel of a rectangular frame have been inserted in it and a small window left between the lintel and the arch (fig. 23). At the bottom of the steps you confront a wall with a small niche said to contain relics of Philoxenos of Mabbugh. The stairway and this part of the crypt are covered with a sloping vault. Through arches on either side at the bottom of the steps you enter the vaults proper (figs. 24 and 25). These were constructed as follows.

A pit was dug and, within it, a large rectangular chamber was built, its walls rising above the top of the pit. Four rows of four arches were built from east to west at an equal distance from each other, those at the sides being about 1.5 metres away from the side walls of the chamber, to which they are joined. Two similar arches were built at the east end and two at the west end, between the outer pairs of arcades, but none in the centre.

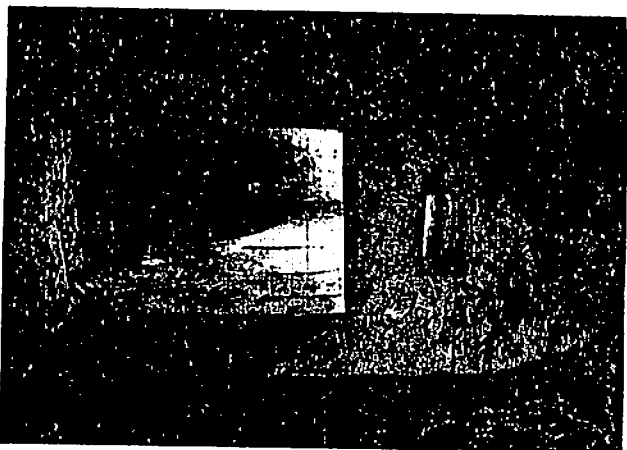


Fig. 23. Entrance to the 'House of Martyrs', now called the 'House of Saints', Qartmin

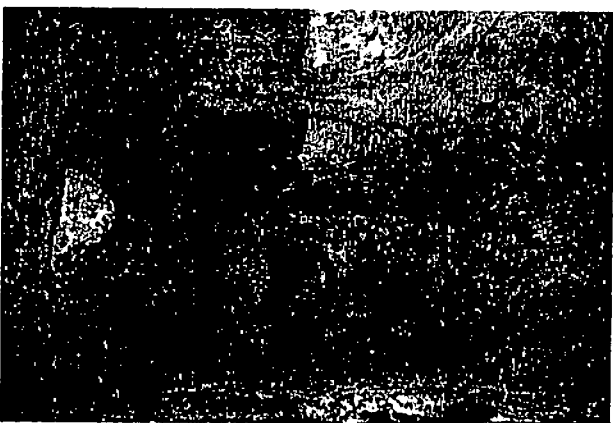


Fig. 24. North vault of the 'House of Martyrs', Qartmin, with stone reliquary sunken in floor



Fig. 25. South vault of the 'House of Martyrs', Qartmin

Above these a thick wall was built onto the wall of the original chamber, out of which were cut four high windows with splayed casements above the four arches.⁶⁶

Two barrel-vaults were then constructed of finely hewn stone without mortar, resting on a wall above the pairs of arcades on either side. The curve of these vaults cuts across the top of the casements of the four windows. Finally, under all the arches except those on either side of the bottom of the stairway were installed what our text calls 'beds', though the word here denotes the 'benches' of *arcosolia*. These were designed to carry the relics of the holy dead who were entombed here. There are, as our text correctly states, fifteen 'beds' in all, counting the three tombs which fill the space between the two vaults as single 'beds'. The relics were fenced off by thin vertical walls of masonry between the upright piers of the arches, forming a continuous wall at waist-level or above along the inside of the arcades. These tombs were covered after each new burial with a sloping roof of masonry. Some have at the corners moulded humps resembling the horns or *acroteria* on a late antique sarcophagus such as that of St Jacob in the crypt of his church at Nisibis.

In the floor of the vaults are two ancient marble reliquaries, their pointed 'roofs' projecting above the pavement and having a hole in the 'gable' through which the holy dust can be touched.⁶⁷

Although it was called 'House of Martyrs', there is reason to believe that abbots and,

⁶⁶ One of these windows is still open; it can be seen from outside in the corridor, about two metres above the ground, over the recent tomb of Bishop Iwanis Afrem, who died in 1984.

⁶⁷ Dolapönü, *Deyr-el-Umur tarihi* (1971), p. 18 has a plan which marks the reliquary in the north vault as that of Samuel of Eshtin and that in the south vault as belonging to Gabriel of Beth Qusjan.

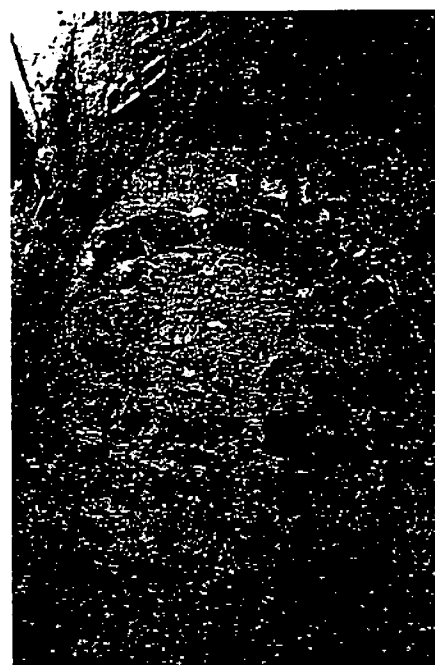


Fig. 26. Arch of the former 'House of Apostles', incorporated in eighth-century anteroom to burial-vaults, dated by the inscription (*INSCR. A.3*) on the vault

later, bishops and patriarchs were buried there. Since the ascetic life was seen as a kind of martyrdom and all these men were monks, no contradiction is necessarily implied. However, it is possible that when it was originally built, the first relics to be installed there were those of actual martyrs, at least supposedly so (cf. xxii.18–19; xxiii.6,15). Above the crypt was built 'a Temple to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste'. There is no evidence of the claim that the abbey possessed relics of these famous martyrs before an inscription of 1867; at that date they were supposed to rest in tombs to the right and left of the entrance to the sanctuary of the conventual church together with relics of Sts Sergius and Bacchus and St Isaiah of Aleppo.⁶⁸

j. The 'House of the Apostles'

and outside it (the burial vault) [they built] another house which is called the House of the Apostles (xxx.19)

⁶⁸ *Inscr. J* 78, where, however, the text is inaccurate in many places; it should read: 'In the year 1867 of Christ came Mor Ignatius the patriarch / of Antioch, who is Jacob II, the weak, and consecrated chrism (*myron*) / and plastered the church and opened these tombs of the Forty / Martyrs and Mor Sergius and Bacchus and Mor Isaiah of Aleppo.' Jarry might also have noted that this inscription is sculpted in relief, not incised. Isaiah of Aleppo, apostle of Anhel in Tur 'Abdin, is the subject of a legend (*AMS* iii, pp. 534–71) in the Awgin Cycle.



Fig. 27. Vaulting-brick excavated in western ruins of Qartmin Abbey. The brick is slightly tapered, being 41 cm long and decreasing from 26×5 cm to 22×4 cm. It is marked down its length in the centre of one side with a zig-zag pattern. A similar trade-mark, flanked by two straight lines, was found on a vaulting-brick in a fifth-century church at Hah. That brick, from the vault behind the sanctuary of Mor Sovo, measured approximately 44×30 cm, with a thickness of 3.5 cm, and was slightly tapered, like that at Qartmin. The bricks in the two arch-bases on the north side of the ruin in fig. 12 measure $41 \times 31 \times 3$ cm, *pace* Bell (Bell/Mango, *T.A.* p. 9 with nn. 30 and 59). The latest dated brick vault in Tur 'Abdin is that at Şalah, which was erected in the mid-eighth century. The brick factories are likely to have been on the banks of the Tigris; the modern kilns near Diyarbakir are constructed of the bricks being baked

The writer does not use the normal phrase for 'outside' (*l-var men*), but he turns it round – *mene(h) wa-l-var* – and says 'from it and outwards'. This apparently means 'next to the entrance of it', an interpretation confirmed by the statement that the Temple of the Forty Martyrs was built 'above these buildings'; for the structure of the 'temple' extends over both the burial-vaults and their antechambers. These antechambers are divided by a wide stone arch, the further chamber being a step higher. In the west wall of each chamber can be seen a stone arch as wide as that between the chambers, but springing from carefully shaped capitals engaged in the wall (fig. 26). These arches have been blocked up with masonry. Their upper part is still visible above ground outside the monastery; it is clear that, before they were blocked up, they were plastered on the inside and outside. Some of the plaster survives with faint traces of a fine painted inscription.⁶⁹ The House of the Apostles was therefore apparently open on the west side, perhaps to enable more people to participate in whatever prayers were said in that

⁶⁹ *INSCR. C.4.*

Dimensions:

Length of wall 6.7 m.

Thickness of wall 1.7 m.

Width of doors 0.65 m.

Width of pipes 12–14 cm.

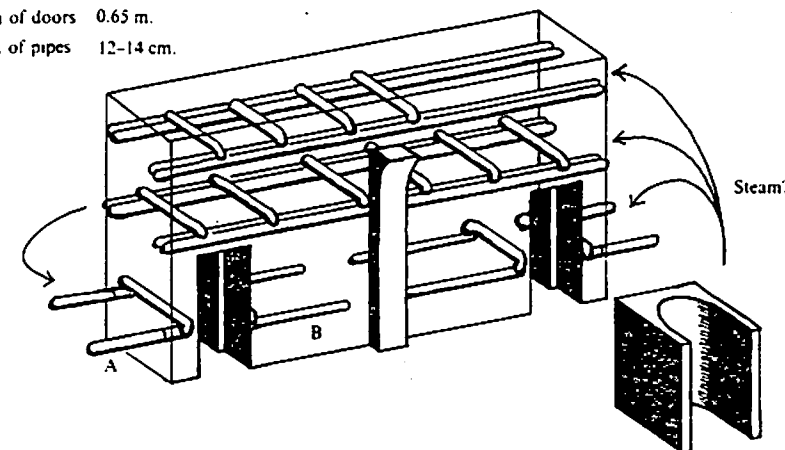


Fig. 28. Wall with internal systems of pipes built across the former 'Great Vault' at Qartmin, now called the 'Bath House'. The wall is represented as partially diaphanous. The pipes are lined with waterproof mortar. The precise way in which the lateral pipes were linked with those at right-angles to them is unclear because of damage, nor has it been discovered how the three systems were related. The parallel pipes suggest circulation; perhaps the horseshoe-shaped furnace which was discovered nearby with ash in it was used to heat water, so that steam could circulate in the wall. The great blocks of stone of which it is built would retain the heat and radiate it into the rooms on either side. This explanation, suggested to me by Simon Ellis, would make this a unique example of such a technique. When the observations underlying this reconstruction were made (in 1978), the lowest part of the wall was covered in rubble and of the lateral pipes only those marked A and B were actually recorded, the rest of the lateral pipes at that level being supplied by conjecture. Since then the rubble has been removed, though unscientifically, and the lower pipes have been sealed with cement.

confined space. In 757/8 an inscription was moulded in plaster on the vault of the southern antechamber to commemorate the making of 'this house'.⁷⁰ The way this vault meets the west wall with its incorporated arch, cutting off a part of one side of it, shows that the arch belonged to an earlier structure. Further renovation work carried out in 1900 in 'this building which is in the House of Saints' was recorded in a stone inscription carved in relief above the entrance. Already in 1835/6, in the first year or two of the reoccupation of the abbey after it had been empty of monks for 120 years, the tomb of John the Arab, which stands in the north-west corner of the further chamber, had been renovated.⁷¹ On the east side of this chamber is a makeshift altar, but no clue as to the original design. Both chambers are vaulted from north to south.

The *Chronicle of Edessa* records that Bishop Ibas (429–48) built a new church in that city 'which today (c. 540) is called the House of the Apostles'.⁷² From this it is clear that

⁷⁰ *INSCR. A.3*; perhaps 'this outer house'.

⁷¹ Date scratched in cement while wet; on the long desertion of the monastery, see S.P. Brock, *Ost. St.* 28 (1979), p. 169 (translating a note in the *Panqitho* of the Saints).

⁷² *Chr. Edessa 540*, p. 7; for the date of this chronicle see A. Palmer, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988), pp. 122–4.

the Theodosian House of the Apostles of the abbey might have been a church. But, if so, it was of a peculiar shape. Perhaps it was originally given some other name and acquired this title after the Founders, Samuel and Simeon, were entombed in the vault. It seems that they might have been designated as 'Apostles'; for in the *Life of Gabriel* we read that Gabriel's relics were exhumed in the 770s and afterwards returned 'in a bronze coffin together with the Apostles' (xci.15). Gabriel himself is called an Apostle at lxxxvi.10 and in several panegyrics from the twelfth century onwards.⁷³

k. The Temple of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (xxxI.19–xxxII.4)

It seems improbable that anything more than a shadow of the groundplan of this building survived to be recorded by Gertrude Bell.⁷⁴ It was a small chapel with transverse nave, antechapel and sanctuary, which was entered through a narrow door. Restoration work was done in the three rooms beyond the antechapel in 1955, as can be seen from a plaster inscription on the vault.

It is very interesting to read of paintings in the interior of this temple and of the House of Apostles (possibly the burial vaults are also included in 'these same buildings'), and strange that the writer was more interested in the range of colours used than in what was represented. His failure to describe this does not mean the paintings were not representational; the record of the Anastasian building equally neglects the subject-matter of the fine mosaics, which have fortunately survived in part.⁷⁵ It is also interesting that the writer portrays 'the Serene King' as issuing detailed instructions about the buildings, as if he did not simply send money, perhaps with craftsmen and architects, and leave the designs to them in consultation with the monks, but actually knew beforehand what was required. Is this the writer's fancy or does it go back to some document drafted in Theodosius' name?

⁷³ [Br. Lib.] Add. [MS] 18,820 (c. end 12th cent.), foll. 15b, 16a; Add. 17,272 (13th cent.), fol. 9a; Add. 17,231 (1484), fol. 153a. Several of these do not explicitly call Gabriel an apostle, but compare him to Peter. 'Apostle' is a term applied generally to bishops.

⁷⁴ Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 33, fig. 20; converted into library in early 1980s.

⁷⁵ LVIII.17–LXI.12; see Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics'.

3

Community and individual: Patterns in upper-Tigritane monasticism

1. The succession to the abbacy

Samuel of Eshtin died on 15 May (xxxII.7). The year is not recorded, which makes it certain that the information was preserved in a calendar of annual commemorations – the ancestor of the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*, which notes this event. If that ancestor specified that it was on the third day of the week that Samuel died, and if the narrator of the *Life* has correctly placed his death about the time of the Theodosian benefaction of 409, the years 406 and 418 would be eligible. But our suspicion is awoken by the fact that Simeon of Qartmin is also said to have died on a Tuesday (LI.9), although this cannot be reconciled with the year and the date of the month given for his commemoration, while Gabriel of Beth Qusān probably *did* die on a Tuesday and so may have been the prototype to which Samuel and Simeon were assimilated.¹ It seems that the hagiographer who made a trilogy of the *Lives* of these men, and who in his introduction drew a comparison between their number and that of the Trinity (II.13–19), attempted to relate their deaths symbolically by making them all occur on the third day of the week. This detail cannot, therefore, help us to find the year of Samuel's death; but since his disciple died in 433 we may concur with our author in placing it c.410.

Of his successor surprisingly little is known, considering the evidence of his fame in antiquity. His name virtually eclipsed that of his master, in the sense that the abbey was known well into the ninth century as that 'of the House of Mor Simeon'.² Perhaps this was because he presided over it in the period immediately following the benefactions of the Theodosian emperors. The Syriac Acts of the second Council of Ephesus in 449 corroborate the impression we gain from the part played in that council by the monk Barṣawmo: that the monastic superiors of the eastern Roman empire enjoyed considerable influence in the reign of Theodosius II.³ This seems to have been because of their

¹ LXXXVII.19–20, with pp. 156–57.

² LV.1–2; LXVII.5–6; *L. Theodosios*, fol. 69a.3; Wright, *MSS London*, pp. 533, 550 (two ninth-century colophons). In 1180 the ancient appellation is found in Br. Lib. Add. MS 14,690: 'in the holy and sacerdotal abbey of the House of Mor Simeon, of Qartmin' (likewise J.P.P. Martin, in *JA* VI.14 (1869), p. 354 ('sacerdotal abbey of Mor Simeon', in 1135)) and as late as 1413 we find it again (reference mislaid; cf. Ch. 5, n. 57; Ch. 6, n. 53).

³ *Acts Ephesus 449*, p. 12: a letter from Theodosius and Valentinian, evoking the struggle between the eastern abbots and certain eastern bishops 'who are tainted with the wicked opinion of Nestorius'; Honigsmann, *Barṣawmo*, pp. 6–8.

'Alexandrian' theological sympathies, as opposed to the 'Antiochene' influence which had gained currency among the eastern bishops.⁴ The same tendency was to put them on the wrong side of the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

When Sozomen, the ecclesiastical historian, writing in the 440s,⁵ remarked that Syriac monasticism flourished in the region of Edessa and 'around Mount Gaugalion' in the province of Amida,⁶ he was probably referring with the latter phrase to the whole of the limestone massif south of Amida. The Syriac name Beth Gawgal is found specifically attached to a part of the southern escarpment of Tur 'Abdin.⁷ But Sozomen, drawing on oral traditions concerning the recent past,⁸ picks out, as leaders of the monastic movement there, two men called Daniel and Simeon.⁹ Unless these famous 'ecclesiastical philosophers' have disappeared without trace in the native sources, they must be Daniel of Aghlosh, founder of the monastery now known as the Der Matina to the west of Mardin,¹⁰ and Simeon, second abbot of Qartmin. Daniel's son, Lazarus, had spread his fame in the West by a fund-raising journey of two years' duration; he used the money to build a church in his father's honour before the latter's death in 439.¹¹ Sozomen began to write very shortly after this, which may explain how he came to hear of Daniel. As for Simeon, it is perhaps not surprising that there should be some general awareness of his existence, as he was the head of a community marked out for special favour by the emperor, a distinction which was to be shared in the latter part of the fifth century by the abbey of Mor John the Urjān.¹²

This abbey of Mor John, to the north of Amida, just outside the city wall, was fortunate in counting John of Ephesus among its *alumni*. In 566 this author set down the tradition concerning the history of his abbey as he had learned it in his youth from Samuel, the head of the priested monks there, who died in 539; this account was supplemented by those of two other old men. Samuel himself had it from the mouths of veterans who had seen the first foundation about the turn of the fourth century.¹³

John 'the Urjān', so called because of his fluency in the language of the Urjāns of

⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch* (1982); H. Bacht, in Grillmeier/Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalcedon II* (1953), pp. 193-314.

⁵ G.C. Hansen, introduction to Sozomen, pp. lxx-lxvi.

⁶ Sozomen III. 14.30 (p. 123 lines 5-8), understanding the preposition *hypo* in the sense of administrative subordination; on Amida, see especially Karalevsky in *DHGE II*, col. 1237-49.

⁷ A. de Halleux (and J.C. Sanders) in *Mus* 96 (1983), p. 8 n. 17; cf. Ch. I, n. 49. An inscription at the monastery of Mor Awgin, dated 1209/10, names an 'architect Joseph from Gawgal' (*Abr-Nahrain* 19 (1980-1), p. 2). Sachau, *Reise* (1883), p. 387, heard the name 'Baghok' (i.e. 'Beth Gawgal'), but did not believe it was correct!

⁸ Hansen is unable to name a likely source for this passage, but it is clear that Sozomen had many informants among the monks of Palestine (Introduction to Sozomen, pp. xlii-lxvii). There was considerable mobility and exchange between the monastic communities of Mesopotamia and Palestine; the latter were likely to be well-informed, as all pilgrims came to their country.

⁹ *loc. cit.*: *hōn ēstēn Daniēl kai Symeon*.

¹⁰ The identification is made by Baršawm, *KBB*, p. 634 and confirmed by the topography given in *L. Daniel* (passim) and *L. Theodotos*, fol. 66b.1-3: between Qeleth and Beth Ma'de (a place near the southern slopes of Ayshumo), near a castle built of great hewn blocks on the summit of Mt Aghlosh, north of Rish'ayno; the monastery (Der Matina, Der Rabat, Kara Kilise) and the castle (Rabbat Kalesi) were visited by J.G. Taylor, in *JGS* 38 (1868), pp. 360-1 and studied by Wiessner, *Ruinenstätten*, neither of whom appear to have been aware of their identity. ¹¹ *L. Daniel*, fol. 101a.3-b.1; summary p. 62 (paraphrased).

¹² *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [558].

¹³ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [553], [563-4], [565-6] and the whole of Ch. 58.

Anzitene,¹⁴ was not the first recluse to shut himself up on the site of the future abbey. He built his hut near a group of hermitages called after Mor Afursam. His remarkable sanctity attracted two distinguished monks from the nearby monastery of the Edessenes, both of them first-rate scribes whose books were still preserved in their abbey in the lifetime of John of Ephesus. Their names were Samuel and Jonathan. Together they built up a community of about fifty men, with sizeable buildings and possessions; but Jonathan, for some reason, distanced himself from the others and only returned after the death of the Founder, who had designated Samuel as his successor. Samuel in turn gave the headship to Jonathan at his death.

This procedure should be compared with what happened at the death of Samuel of Eshtin. He entrusted the government of his monastery to his disciple and co-founder Simeon (xxxii. 5-6). The hagiographer found it natural that this decision should not be questioned by the community. In the same way Daniel of Aghlosh in 439 bequeathed the headship of his monastery to Lazarus¹⁵ and Dodho designated his disciple Habib to succeed him in the early sixth century.¹⁶ A little later, Aho entrusted to his disciple Heworo the direction of his 'upper and lower monasteries'.¹⁷ The principle seems to be that the first disciples are the rightful successors to monastic founders. When two disciples, like Samuel and Jonathan at Amida, joined the master together at the outset, it is made clear that, although one of them succeeds him officially, they really continue on an equal footing.¹⁸ The principle of abbatial designation, however, might not seem so indisputable if it was applied beyond this point, the founder's disciple and successor designating in turn a disciple of his own to follow him; for there would very likely be monks of the first generation senior to that disciple, or with some other claim to leadership.

Both these points are borne out by the *Life* of John bar Aphthonia. When the monastery of St Thomas near Seleucia-on-the-Orontes lost its abbot to the Chalcedonians at the beginning of the sixth-century persecutions, the monks, old and young, were unanimous in choosing the gifted John as their head, overriding his protestation that 'headship belongs to the seniors'.¹⁹ Later, when the community was driven into exile, John resettled them at Qenneshre, on the Euphrates opposite Jerablus.²⁰ This was his foundation and it bore his name, so it is no surprise to find him designating as his successor 'Alexander, an old man, well-respected and of high repute' and enjoining him to enforce the same Rule by which John had lived and governed.²¹

The early fifth-century 'Rule of Rabbula for the Good Order of the Monks' seems to envisage a committee, formed of 'those who have emerged as priests and deacons from the monasteries [i.e. from monastic seminaries?] and who have had entrusted to them churches in the villages', meeting to select abbots for 'their monasteries' on the criteria of proven worth and ability to lead the community. The electors themselves are disqualified from this office: 'they shall continue to officiate in their churches'.²² We cannot tell whether this rule also applied in the diocese of Amida at that date, but by the end of the century it certainly did not.

¹⁴ Possibly a descendant of Urarjān; the kingdom of Urarjā had stretched at this point as far as the Euphrates. ¹⁵ *L. Daniel*, fol. 101b.2. ¹⁶ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [7]. ¹⁷ *L. Aho*, fol. 185a.

¹⁸ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [556].

¹⁹ *L. John bar Aphthonia*, section 6.

²⁰ *L. John bar Aphthonia*, section 8.

²¹ *L. John bar Aphthonia*, section 9.

²² *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 158, no. 21.

The oral tradition about the abbots of the Amidene foundation of Mor John the Urtian does not specify how the succession was determined after Jonathan's death. Job, Abraham of Amida, and Abraham II are simply stated to have 'arisen afterwards'. The same applies to most of the others. But when Abraham II was made bishop of the land of the Urtians (Beth Urtiye) in Anziene, the monks asked him to appoint them an abbot to succeed him. He urged them rather to 'deliberate among yourselves, and the man whom you know to be suited for you set over you as head, lest eventually you find fault either with me or with someone else'.²²

However, they insisted that he should choose for them, so he laid his hand on an old man 'who was below many of the monks of the abbey' in order of seniority and a mere shepherd by origin, and forced him to stand in front of the altar and to put on the abbatial hood and take up the pastoral staff.²³ Abraham III was 'vigilant and energetic and earnest, and eager to promote the interests of the convent'; but a party of senior monks, many of whom were learned men and refused to be ruled by a peasant, caused 60 of the 400-strong community to leave the abbey, and founded another of their own at Beth 'Ruvo'.²⁴ This was at the end of the fifth century.

This all-too-human tale of contention illustrates the obvious hazards of a process of designation. It also shows one of the ways in which such a conflict could be solved. Other hazards and other solutions are suggested by the Will of Theodotus of Amida, who retired with his disciple Joseph to the monastery of Mor Abay near Qelch and founded a tiny monastery on the hillside above it shortly before his death in 668. Although the Will is headed 'Testament composed by Theodotus in the monastery of Mor Abay', it appears that the monastery referred to in this passage is that founded by Theodotus himself:

Let [Joseph] dwell in this monastery and possess its life and its brothers. If it occurs to him that he should leave it, let him give it to whomsoever he will. Let no-one dispute with him or say of him any but good things. Whoever shall pick a quarrel with him, whether he be a Christian or a magistrate, so that he have cause to leave this monastery, let him be cursed in heaven and on earth, he and all that is his, in his fields and in his house for ever. Amen!

I write concerning this son of my bowels Mor Joseph, that if he knows that it will be of benefit to his soul, he should stay and dwell in the monastery; but if he thinks and knows that there is harm to him in this place, and any person puts obstacles in his way by compulsion, he shall give an answer for it to God on the Day of Judgement. If anyone seeks to be exalted over him, over the son of my love, Mor Joseph, anyone of those who live in this monastery, and refuses to obey and humble himself, let no-one come to that man's aid when he shall seek to expel him. And whoever stirs up a party against him, God will stir up against him unbearable evil for ever. Amen!²⁵

From what has been said it emerges that, whereas designation was a natural procedure for the first succession, when a monastic community had formed around a saint and his disciple, tensions might arise thereafter because of the concept of the rights of seniority, of learning, of social background and so on, tensions which the respected authority of the departing abbot might be insufficient to dissipate. Sure as he was of his own choice, Abraham II had felt it more prudent to encourage an election.

²² *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [559].

²³ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [560].

²⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [560-62].

²⁵ *L. Theodotus*, fol. 67b 1-2.

The system outlined in the 'Rule of Rabbula' is opaque to us, because it is unclear whether the priests and deacons who emerge from the monasteries to serve in the villages are themselves in some sense still members of their monastic communities. If the selection committee consists merely of 'distinguished old boys' of a monastery's seminary, its constitution will have been uncongenial to the community, for however divided such an establishment may be, the threat of outside intervention will give them a common cause to defend, while its exercise will furnish ammunition to the losers. If Rabbula's intention was to restrict the independence of the monasteries, it seems unlikely that his régime survived him.²⁷

In any case, by the late eighth century the monasteries were no longer supplying clergy to the villages. At least, there is no evidence for it; whereas the production of educated clergy by the village for the village is attested in this period.²⁸ Thus, the canonical anathema against 'monks who bribe for the abbacy', which first appears in the canons of George, bishop of the Arabs of Mesopotamia from 688 to 724, and which is reiterated by the patriarch Cyriac in 794, may be taken as evidence of a generally elective procedure within the monasteries.²⁹

2. The catalogue of holy men

After Samuel and Simeon and before Gabriel of Beth Qusian, the history of their abbey and of Tur 'Abdin is populated by many names, commemorated in the liturgical calendar and in various lists, such as the list of ten stylites in the *Book of Life*³⁰ or the list of 53 holy men in section 12 of the *Life of Samuel* (xxi.8-xxiv.12). There is considerable overlap between these lists and the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*, and the various sources represent quasi-independent traditions complementing each other. But it is difficult to establish any chronological framework for the earthly lives of this 'cloud of witnesses', commemorated in the unchanging perspective of eternity. The stylites modelled themselves on the great Simeon and therefore should have lived in the later fifth century and after; indeed, Abel, who is associated with an ancient monastery near Midyat,³¹ is remembered in connection with Mor Akhsnoyo, that is, Philoxenos of Mabbugh (d. 523).³² If his position high in the lists and at the top of that in the *Book of Life* means anything, it is that he was indeed (in the words of the latter source) 'the first stylite to appear in the monastery of Qartmin' (p. 6). Matthew and Jacob the Old are listed among the stylites, but if the *Life of Samuel* is right to associate them with John Chrysostom's exile (403-4) and the Council of Ephesus (431) respectively, they are either homonyms, or else (more probably) they were wrongly identified as stylites

²⁷ Honigsmann, *Bergama*, pp. 31-4 documents the disharmony between Rabbula and the monks of the district of Perrhe.

²⁸ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 17-24 (Canons of 812/13) paint a vivid picture of the (contentious) life of the village clergy in all its ranks; there is no hint of any monastic connection.

²⁹ *Can. Gregory*, p. 113 [Nau, p. 94, No. 101]; *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 11, No. 19.

³⁰ *Book of Life*, p. 67; 'Agan, [we pray] for the fair souls of the stylites of this holy abbey: Abel the Stylite, Cyrus the Old, Matthew, Daniel the Stylite, John, Turhael, Jacob the Old, Gabriel, George, Sergius' (reading TAW for OLAF at the beginning of 'Turhael').

³¹ *L. Philoxenos*, fol. 119b: 'the village of Mochhyadh is next to the monastery of Mor Abel the Stylite'; Bell/Mango, *T4*, pp. 8, 10, 35-8, 51, 130-1; fig. 23; pls. 176-83.

³² See the beginning of Ch. 4.

(Matthew, according to the *Life of Samuel*, was a recluse and Jacob a seer (xxii.15–16)).³³ The Syriac Acts of that other Council of Ephesus, held in 449, show that a monk called Jacob was present from one of the eastern monasteries at the behest of the emperors to give evidence against Ibas;³⁴ it is possible that the Jacob in our lists was identified with him and that a mistake was made about the date of the council (the same year is given in *Chr. Edessa* 540).

We do not really know enough about local conditions to give firm dates at which the various martyrs are likely to have died (most at the hands of the Persians), nor to say after which date large-scale conflict with and conversion of pagans and Jews in the region becomes unlikely. But probably Stephen, who converted pagans 'on the plain', and Maron, who baptized 2,000 people in the city of Gozarto d-Shu'o (xxii.5–6), belong to the early fifth century; this is confirmed by the appearance of a Stephen and a Maron among the foremost disciples of Simeon (xl.7–8), the second abbot of Qartmin (d. 433). Likewise, John of Kallinikos, who doused a Magian sacred flame, Severus, who replaced a cultic tree with a church, and Athanasius, who baptized all the Jews in his neighbourhood (xxiii.7–9, 13–15), should be dated at the latest before the Arab conquest (639–40).³⁵

Section 7 of the *Life of Simeon* deserves to be taken seriously. It describes an epidemic that raged in Tur 'Abdin between 14 September and 20 October, causing about 5,000 deaths (xl.3–16). The fact that such an outbreak is likely in a waterless region at the end of the dry season did not occur to the writer, so there is no reason why these plausible dates should have been invented. Simeon took ten monks with him and processed around the villages, praying for an end to the plague. The monks' names were Cyrus, Abraham, John, Stephen, Maron, Abay, Zufo, Daniel, George and 'Ammi. All these names appear in the list in the *Life of Samuel*, eight of them within the first fifteen places. In the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin* we find abbots of Qartmin with the names Cyrus (I and II), Stephen, Maron of 'Aynwardo and Abay of Hah, and one bishop of Tur 'Abdin (also a native of Hah) called 'Ammi.³⁶ This last, whose identification with the disciple of Simeon is made the more certain by the rarity of his name,³⁷ would thus have lived in the fifth century. He is the earliest bishop of Tur 'Abdin of whom we know³⁸ and his title in the *Calendar* must be counted among the earliest witnesses to the name 'Tur 'Abdin'.³⁹ 'Ammi and George are both named as martyrs in the *Life of Samuel* (xxiii.6;

³³ But see p. 105. ³⁴ *Acts Ephesus* 449, p. 46.

³⁵ This Athanasius is named as 'Sandloyo' in the Istanbul MS, which alone preserves the text at this point. This is certainly an interpolation, the motive of which was to confer sanctity by association with these holy men on the controversial person of the eighth-century patriarch, Athanasius Sandloyo, a monk of Qartmin (see Ch. 5, section 4). ³⁶ *Cal. T.A.* 14 Dec., 19 Mar., 20 Jun., 18 Nov., 30 Sept.

³⁷ Probably it was adopted at monastic profession, since it is a learned allusion to the prophecy of Hosea, Ch. 1: 'Ammi = 'my people', lo 'Ammi = 'not my people'. The 'eastern quarter' of Hah was named for 'Ammi, according to the *Calendar* (here mistranslated by Peeters).

³⁸ Pace E. Honigmann, in *Traditio* 5 (1947), p. 155, who thinks the bishopric of Tur 'Abdin 'obviously' post-dated the elevation of Dara as a metropolitan see.

³⁹ L. Jacob might also be cited (as it is by M. Streck in *El IV* (1934), p. 944), for Tur 'Abdin is named in the oldest section of it, the record of Constantius' fortifications on the Tigris frontier (cf. Ch. 2, n. 42); this *Life* attests a Bishop Benjamin of Hesno d-Kifo, who visited Jacob at Salah, from which one might be tempted to conclude that there was not yet a bishop of Tur 'Abdin. But it seems that Salah belonged at that date to the 'province' of Hesno d-Kifo, that of Tur 'Abdin being perhaps based on an axis between Hah and the castle of Tur 'Abdin. The construction of that castle remains the most likely occasion for the institution of such a bishopric before Anastasius.

xxii.18–19) and in the *Calendar*. The name Daniel belonged to one of the early stylites (not to be confused with the famous Chalcedonian pillar-saint) and appears as such in the *Book of Life* and in the *Calendar*.⁴⁰ If this Daniel is to be identified with the contemporary of Simeon of Qartmin, we have to assume he mounted his pillar towards the end of his life. But there is no reason to doubt that we have here the names of ten holy men of Tur 'Abdin in the middle of the fifth century.

Combining this list with the *Calendar* and with the *Church History* of John of Ephesus, which mentions an abbot of Qartmin called John, who later became a bishop and died in 578,⁴¹ we can construct a list of fifth- and sixth-century abbots of Qartmin:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1 Samuel (d. c.410) | |
| 2 Simeon (d. 433) | |
| 3 Cyrus I | } (in any order between 434 and c.500) |
| 4 Stephen | |
| 5 Maron | |
| 6 Abay | |
| 7 Simeon | |
| 8 Severus (c.534?) | } (in any order between c.500 and c.600, taking note of the probable dates of the abbacies of Severus ⁴² and of John) |
| 9 John (c.572) | |
| 10 Cyrus II | |
| 11 Šufanyo | } (became a bishop in 614/15 and died in 633/4) |
| 12 Daniel | |

The series of abbots of the monastery of John the Urṭian is given in the well-authenticated oral history set down in 566 by John of Ephesus. Between the first arrival of the founder 'about the year 700' (= 388/9) and the time of writing, when Sergius II was abbot, there are thirteen names; but the first three were approximate coevals, and there was one resignation, in addition to the loss of an abbot to the episcopacy, which is paralleled in the Qartmin list by John. These circumstances explain the proportionately greater number of abbots. Normally an average reign might well have been nineteen years. Here, for comparison, is the list of abbots of the monastery of Mor John at Amida:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1 John | (arrived c.389) |
| 2 Samuel | } (probably did not live much longer than the founder) |
| 3 Jonathan | |
| 4 Job | |
| 5 Abraham I | (resigned) |
| 6 Abraham II | (became bishop of Beth Urṭoye) |
| 7 Abraham III | (alive during the Persian siege of 502/3) |
| 8 Cosmas | (survived the death of Anastasius in 518) |
| 9 Sergius I | |
| 10 Sinay | (522/3–526/7) |
| 11 Abo | (relics returned from Claudia to Amida in 548?) |
| 12 Abraham IV | |
| 13 Sergius II | (alive in 567) |

⁴⁰ cf. n. 30; *Cal. T.A.* 11 Dec.

⁴¹ *Chr. John Eph.* 585, iv.33.

⁴² *INSCR. A.1.*

Even if little further progress can be made in imposing chronological order on the great catalogue in the *Life of Samuel*, it will repay closer study. Peeters, working from the inaccurate eighteenth-century *Berlin Paraphrase*, was inclined to doubt the authenticity of the catalogue. Noticing that not all the names appear in the *Calendar* and observing that this is difficult to explain if, as our writer says, 'each of these men has his own story . . . which is read among the faithful' (xxiv.14-15), he concludes that the catalogue contains many legendary names.⁴³ We may concede that a saint important enough to be commemorated in a literary hagiography is unlikely to have been omitted from the *Calendar*. But if the generalization is merely exaggerated, the frequency with which a correspondence is found between the two sources may legitimately be held to enhance the historical status of the catalogue, thus giving credibility by association even to those names which are not found in the *Calendar*.

Here, however, a distinction should perhaps be drawn between the first forty-odd names in the list and the last dozen, because there are no certain identifications and only six possible ones in the latter. By contrast, all but ten of the first forty names show plausible or certain correspondence with the *Calendar*. I suggest that this catalogue is a liturgical compilation, inspired, perhaps, by the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, Chapter 11.⁴⁴ The antiphonal style, with the frequent parallelism of content in its couplets, has an unmistakable rhythm which is only occasionally interrupted by later accretions (for example, xxiii.11-13). The rhapsodic method of composition would have made it easy for a dozen extra names to be added. These might therefore be regarded as being of questionable historical status, while the first forty or so, even those who are certainly absent from the *Calendar*, should properly be given the benefit of the doubt.

At this point it may be useful to make a comparison in tabular form (Table 3). It seems certain that all the abbots of Qartmin after Simson of Qartmin and up to Daniel, who became a bishop, are represented both in the catalogue and in the *Calendar*. These and other certain identifications are italicized in the column on the right. Entries between brackets in that column are transferable to a homonym elsewhere in the catalogue; it will be noted that, whereas there are just enough Johns and Simeons available in the *Calendar*, there is only one Abraham between the three in the catalogue.

If the first forty names in the catalogue are probably historical, it does not necessarily follow that the hagiographer is right to call them disciples of Samuel and Simeon. He is certainly wrong to imply that they were all contemporaries of the Founder (xxi.11-12). The list was compiled in Tur 'Abdin. To all appearances it began as a catalogue of the eminent *alumni* of Qartmin. If we may take it as that – an assumption which is supported by the overlapping list of 'stylites' (stylites and recluses?) in the *Book of Life* and the list of 'brothers' in section 7 of the *Life of Simeon* – it provokes some interesting observations. The community at Qartmin included recluses and stylites, or at least produced them; it included a man with a personal following of fifty and another who made the pilgrimage to Mt Sinai; it allowed monks to frequent Corduene, Maypergat, and the plains around Tur 'Abdin, and even Ephesus and Bithynia. Several of its members were large-scale evangelists; several were martyred. The picture is not one of a

disciplined body of spiritual trainees, confined within a wall. Even the abbot could spend three or four days in the wilds without his absence so much as causing a remark (xliii.9-14).

There is a certain imbalance due to the fact that the catalogue ignores ordinary monks and concentrates on the outstanding 'graduates' of the monastic training-house, who were perhaps no longer subject to a common rule governing the junior ones. Simeon's hagiographer gives us to understand that the holy man left a large corpus of advice and commands for his community (xlviii.11-12). But the symbiosis of an individualistic and a corporate way of asceticism is a subject worthy of further investigation. No discursive writing on the subject is known from Tur 'Abdin itself in our period, so we must start with John of Ephesus' description of the common life during the early sixth century in the region of Amida nearby, an account which is complemented in some respects by the *Life of Theodosius*, a seventh-century text centred on the same city.

3. The common life according to John of Ephesus

John of Ephesus was born c.507 in Ingilene, a region north of Amida.⁴⁵ His survival beyond infancy was attributed by his parents to the intervention of a stylite in the neighbourhood and, as a result, John was brought up in the enclosure where the stylite's column stood. In 522/3, to get away from his family, he joined the community of John the Urian in its exile with the other monastic communities of Amida at Hazim. After 'the return to the city convents' allowed by Justinian in 530, John travelled to Antioch (532), Egypt (534) and Constantinople (535). His community was again exiled in 537 and settled, after two unsuccessful attempts elsewhere, in the region of Claudia on the Euphrates. In 540 John went to Constantinople, which he made the base of his activity until his death in 586. Although the conditions of his time were abnormal, there is still no better witness to the forms of monasticism which flourished between c.510 and 540 in the upper Tigris region, John recorded his experiences in the series of ascetical profiles known as the *Lives of Eastern Saints*, which was composed in 566 and added to in 568. Putting together the scattered details⁴⁶ we can reconstruct an early sixth-century monastery in an area very close to Tur 'Abdin.

Characteristic was the enclosure with its single gate. Outside was a martyrion; inside, an oratory, a refectory, a kitchen, common latrines, barn-like chambers and individual cells. Some of these cells were constructed inside the large chambers. The oratory contained an altar and a vestry. If there were other buildings typical of a monastery in his time, John does not mention them. Kitchen gardens and orchards surrounded the complex.

As these arrangements imply, the monks shared a common life of prayer and material provision. They put themselves under the rule of an abbot, who might go up to the capital to make representations on behalf of his abbey's material welfare,⁴⁷ but who otherwise delegated the supervision of the monastery's economy to a steward. The

⁴³ *Anal. Boll.* 27 (1908), pp. 132-3.

⁴⁴ The parallel may have prompted the compiler of the *Qartmin Trilogy* to follow the catalogue with an exhortation (section 13), just as Hebrews, Ch. 11 is followed by a 'sermon' in Ch. 12.

⁴⁵ This summary is based on Brooks' Introduction to *L.L. Eastern Saints*, p. iv-v.

⁴⁶ The footnotes will not document every detail, but only those of particular interest.

⁴⁷ *L.L. Eastern Saints*, p. [455].

abbot had a 'household' of lay-brothers, who, though not themselves monks, might be involved in every aspect of the common life.⁴⁸ They had certain duties to perform after the night service and after the midday service; at other times they were probably in attendance on the abbot. The rest of the community was divided into elders, priests and brothers; among the elders (some of whom were no doubt also priests) the senior men had considerable personal authority, which they could seek to impose when the careful balance of community life was under threat.⁴⁹ There may also have been a monk with the office of 'Visitor' or 'Executive', who was responsible for certain affairs of the community outside the enclosure.⁵⁰

Four common services united the monks in the oratory at midnight, morning, noon and evening; probably the seven prescribed 'times' of prayer were all included, the third hour following without a break on morning prayers, the ninth on noon, and compline on evening prayers.⁵¹ The community was called to prayer by a gong. Evening prayers were followed by a meal; there may have been a breakfast, too, on some days, after morning prayers. Meals were cooked and served by the *shabihoye* ('weekers'), the batch of monks on duty in any single week. (When the Amidene convents shared common quarters in exile a total of c. 1,000 monks were divided into twenty batches of fifty, so each monk had two or three duty-weeks a year.⁵²) Under the general supervision of the steward (or stewards) the kitchen work was regulated by the *rishay shabe*, who were probably the heads of the respective duty-batches. In the refectory a high table was reserved for the abbot and the elders; guests of the community were invited to sit there also. Each of the other tables was supervised by its 'table head', who normally said grace at the beginning of the meal. (John seems to imply that the majority of the tables in his monastery abutted the walls of the refectory on either side, but that there was a table in the centre aisle for the juniors.) Wine and water were sent round the tables when the abbot gave the order during the evening meal on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. After the meal everyone stood and sang grace together; then the monks went to their respective cells and dormitories and lay down until the gong for night prayers, except for the duty-monks, who had to work late into the night.

An hour or at most two hours of rest followed night prayers; thereafter until the morning service the monks were engaged in specifically religious activities. There was considerable latitude in the execution of these. Some learned psalms or practised mortification alone in their cells; others would group themselves around their chosen 'master' and repair to the refectory, the oratory or elsewhere to study the Scriptures and to learn the perfect life together; others again had jobs (*eshkoryotho*) to do in the oratory.⁵³ Between the morning and noon services the community scattered to a number of chambers, where they either read improving literature (the Bible, the Fathers, saints' *Lives*) or else performed their allotted manual tasks. In the afternoon

the guests and some of the monks were free to rest again, but the 'abbot's household' was still active during the siesta.

We gain little information from John about the celebration of the Eucharist. In the makeshift quarters of their exile in Constantinople some monks had altars in their separate cells and the mysteries were frequently celebrated; but the reference is to private celebrations by priested monks. We are left to guess that the communal celebrations may have taken place after the noonday service on certain days of the week; there would be no breakfast before the Eucharist.⁵⁴

Nor does John explain where the monasteries got their income. Tithes and vows were certainly a regular source, though there is no evidence that the tithes were ever compulsory. Probably objects were made and sold; not only common sense, but also the example of the Desert Fathers of Egypt, suggest as much. That the monasteries owned land and forests can be inferred from two instances: the endowment by imperial decree of the village of Nardo in Ingilene, the territory of which was rich in timber, was shared in the latter part of the fifth century by the two Amidene monasteries of John the Urtian and of Zuqnin;⁵⁵ and in John's own time the combined Amidene communities provided corn from the fertile fields of Hazim for drought-stricken purchasers from surrounding regions.⁵⁶ The sixth-century persecutions may well have involved the confiscation of some lands. But the monasteries were still well enough provided to support a number of poor and sick people who camped at the gates.

Guests were welcome within the abbey walls, though women might not enter male communities, nor men enter nunneries. (Of the latter John tells us very little, beyond signalling the existence of nunneries in the territories of Mabbugh and Beth Urjoye; by contrast he has a good deal to say about individual female religious.⁵⁷) It is implied that guests were normally travellers from another region. More often than not they were themselves adepts of the religious life. During those years of doctrinal controversy, strangers were questioned as to their theological standpoint before they were allowed to stay.⁵⁸ There was no limit set to the period of their sojourn.⁵⁹ Seated on high table at meals, they were in every way accorded the respect due to priests, to the abbot, even to Christ himself. They might sleep in the oratory, or, if they chose, in another building. Though normally associated with the rhythm of the community's life, they were free to rest or to wander in the gardens during the day. The abbot himself was concerned for the well-being of the guest.⁶⁰ There were always monks ready to wash his hands after a meal, to spread a rug, to give him a change of clothes while they washed and mended his own. But neither in John of Ephesus nor in any other source have I found a reference to an official guestmaster.

To be admitted to the community itself was to put oneself under obedience and to enter a course of monastic discipline and training (*tulmodho*). Some monasteries known

⁴⁸ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [361], [363], [364], with Brooks' note 3, p. [361].

⁴⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [222]. ⁵⁰ cf. *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [450].

⁵¹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, index, p. [624] *sub voce* 'Hours'; Brooks thinks that only three offices were said in the oratory (p. [408] n. 2). ⁵² *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [416]; Brooks (note 1) has a different calculation.

⁵³ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [254] with n. 1. For this meaning of *eshkoryotho*, see Awdo, *Lex.* p. 51, *sub voce* 'eshkard'. *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 221, no. 9 has *shkorocho* (vocalization uncertain), which may be the same as *eshkoryotho*, with a related meaning.

⁵⁴ Foreucharistic ethics in John's time, see the canons of John of Tella, *Can. W-Syr.*, I, pp. 145-56 [cf. Nau, pp. 20-30]; the Rule written by John of Tella for the monastery of Mor Zakay of Kalinikos refers to the communal monastic Eucharist (= *Can. Mor Zakay*).

⁵⁵ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [212]. ⁵⁶ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [614].

⁵⁷ *LL. Eastern Saints*, Nos. 12, 27, 28, 55; see S.P. Brock and S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley, California, 1987). ⁵⁸ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [361].

⁵⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [250], [366]; Vööbus, *Einiges über die karitative Tätigkeit* (1947), p. 11, doubts this. ⁶⁰ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [364].

to John would receive a man who was a runaway slave or criminal, or one at variance with his wife or with the law, and admit him to the full status of a monk without due precautions. But John particularly admired the system operating in one of the great Amidene convents of his time. He described it in detail.⁶¹

After being thoroughly interrogated as to his background and his motives and the history of his resolve, he is made to stand with the poor at the gate for thirty days. Then, if he still wishes, he may enter the enclosure, thus 'burying himself alive' and relinquishing every claim to worldly property. Three months' regular attendance at the office and assiduous execution of kitchen duty and the menial tasks of cleaning the latrines and so on qualifies him for the status of 'penitent', a grade also accorded to certain laymen outside the monasteries and marked by a round tonsure of the crown of the head.⁶² After a further three months he brings forward referees to recommend him and applies for the robe and the finger-ring of monastic obedience.⁶³ If he is successful, half of his head is shorn, the rest being shaved at the end of a year (from the time of his first tonsure as a penitent?⁶⁴). He is clothed in a tunic and hood made of straw⁶⁵ with a string for a belt. Three years after his first tonsure he receives, in a solemn ceremony in front of the sanctuary, the full apparel of a monk (tunic, cowl, *m'alyono* or cloak, *galo* or outer coat, and girdle⁶⁶) and after this there can be no turning back. (A monk might leave his community with the consent of the abbot but if he went back to the world and took a wife, this was counted as adultery or worse.⁶⁷)

The authority of an abbot over his monks was absolute in spiritual terms, though, as we shall see, it was by no means totalitarian in its effect. A monk who left his community without his abbot's consent incurred the intolerable burden of 'the living Word of God' (Hebrews 4:12f),⁶⁸ the effect of which was inescapably interior; there was no legal penalty, but the man's soul was believed to be held by a quasi-magical binding-spell, from which only his abbot could release him. It was possible in a case of necessity for another to take it upon himself by the grace of intercession and so to secure by proxy the abbot's liberating consent.

John tells of one case⁶⁹ where a monk recently admitted to a new community, having

⁶¹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [278–83]. ⁶² *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [121].

⁶³ As far as I know this is the only reference to the ring of monastic obedience, though frequently monastic authors speak of their life as a betrothal to Christ; the giving of a ring was of old a symbol of betrothal among the Syrians (*Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 13, 42, 56, 60), as with us.

⁶⁴ This is Brooks' suggestion, *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [282] n. 3.

⁶⁵ cf. *L. Daniel*, fol. 99b. 1: 'a tunic of plaited straw'. I have not found any more detailed description of such a garment which would show how it was made.

⁶⁶ This more or less corresponds to what monks in the eastern Mediterranean area were wearing (Oppenheim, *Symbolik und religiöse Wertung des Mönchskleides* (1932), who does not use the Syriac sources), supposing (in spite of xxv. 12–13) that the Syrians wore sandals (cf. *INSCR. A. 8*). The *m'alyono* and the *galo* correspond approximately to the *pallium* and the *melote*. The Syrians do not seem to have had the *analabas* (Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–9); the staff (*ibid.*, pp. 97–9) and the hair-shirt or iron vest (*ibid.*, pp. 87–94) are attested for advanced ascetics (see pp. 85–88 below), who seem to have worn a long-sleeved tunic, as opposed to the sleeveless one attested in Oppenheim's sources (*ibid.*, pp. 44–9). *Can. Gregory*, p. 116, gives the list of a Syrian Orthodox monk's clothes in the thirteenth century as: tunic, belt, cowl, *galo*, sandals, cross.

⁶⁷ cf. n. 63; *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 4 (No. 14), 11–12 (No. 21), 37 (No. 3).

⁶⁸ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [262].

⁶⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, No. 18; this is the origin of section 20 of the *Life of Gabriel* (LXXXIII. 4–LXXXVI. 1), hence the inconsistency at LXXXIV. 11–13.

claimed that his previous abbot had set him free, was found in mortal agony. The customary prayers of a group of monks with the Gospel Book and a thurible failed to secure the release of his soul either to life or to death; even when the relics and the Eucharistic Offering⁷⁰ were brought to his bedside in the presence of 120 praying monks, his condition remained unchanged. The 'head of the elders' (was this another office in the hierarchy?), perceiving that the soul must be held by the 'word of inhibition' of the monk's previous abbot, appealed for a voluntary substitute. A monk called Addai came forward and by general intercession the 'inhibition' was mysteriously transferred and the sick monk died. Addai then journeyed directly to the latter's previous monastery to secure his own release.

The unfortunate at the centre of this drama was distinguished, as John (an eyewitness) tells us, 'by the appearance of a mourner'. The word evokes the third beatitude: 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted'. In a sense, all monks were mourners,⁷¹ but the Syriac word (*avilo*) clearly has a technical, restrictive sense as well. Traditionally, it has been rendered as 'anchorite', but it is hard to see how a monk living under obedience to an abbot in a monastery can be called an anchorite.⁷² Baršawmo of the Northern Mountain, who was accorded the epithet 'chief of the mourners', vowed himself to an extreme state of abnegation in the pattern of the biblical Nazirites, enduring voluntarily scorching heat and freezing cold, a hair shirt and iron chains, a diet of roots and berries and a perpetual upright posture.⁷³ John of Ephesus writes about two 'Nazirites', John and Abay, who lived in monastic communities.⁷⁴ Both were conspicuous for their perpetual weeping and in other respects also conformed to the model of the 'chief of the mourners', though John does not actually call them mourners. John the perfect Nazirite had worn a bald patch on his forehead from making obeisances and went out of his way to kneel on scalding sand in the noonday sun: Baršawmo wore an iron shirt and stood in the sun until it burned his body; he wept copiously and spent all day in painful obeisance.⁷⁵

In describing Sergius the recluse and his master Simeon – though these men were not in a community – John confirms the equation between 'Nazirite' and 'mourner'.⁷⁶ The Chalcedonian mob in Amida 'shaved off the hair of naziritehood' from Sergius' head, 'for both he and his master were in the honoured *skhēma* of mournership (*avilutho*)'. It is clear from this that uncut hair was part of the distinguishing appearance of a 'mourner', as of John the Baptist and the Old Testament Nazirites. The word *skhēma* in its Syriac usage includes the way the hair was worn or cut; it also refers to the habit. John tells us that Abay the Nazirite owned one tunic and a patchwork cape. Illustrations of Baršawmo and of Matthew of Nineveh in two manuscripts which were executed respectively in 1055 at Melitene and in 1203 at Edessa show these archetypal 'mourners'

⁷⁰ Literally: 'the Lord of the World'; cf. p. [262] n. 2. Icons are conspicuous by their absence.

⁷¹ cf. *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 151 (No. 11) [Nau, p. 25 (no. 11)].

⁷² cf. van Helmond, *Mas'oud du Tour 'Abdin* (1942), p. 7 n. 16, with correct emphasis.

⁷³ Vööbus, *Asceticism*, II, p. 206 notes 56, 57; *L. Baršawmo*, fol. 72b–74a; summary, pp. 274–76. Each abnegation is termed a 'distinction', *purshono* (not 'événement', pace Nau, summary, p. 273 n. 4), which invites comparison with the *nzire d-purshono* of *Can. Mur Zakay*.

⁷⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, Nos. 3, 14.

⁷⁵ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [40]; *L. Baršawmo*, loc. cit. (n. 73).

⁷⁶ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [104].

in clothing distinct from that of other Syrian Orthodox monks.⁷⁷ There is no reason (*pace* Leroy) to believe that either of these images derives from Egypt.⁷⁸

In the earlier portrait, Baršawmo wears a light-brown, full-length tunic fitting the wrists with cuffs and covering the feet with a hem. This is girded with a black rope, the ends of which are tied in the middle and hang down vertically, joined by three symbolic knots, before being looped up at either side and tucked into the girdle above the hips. A cowl of dark brown material decorated with bands of white embroidery seems to be formed by sewing together the top corners of a long rectangular 'panel' to form a crest along the axis of the head; a slit in the 'panel' allows it to be passed over the head and the other end hangs down the front of the saint covering the girdle, but finishing short of the three knots. A loose cape in a dark brown material covers the shoulders and is clasped over the long beard. In the portrait of Matthew the crumpled sleeves of the tunic have no cuffs at the wrist; the girdle is of a light colour and passes over the 'front panel', the three knots and looped ends are absent; the 'panel' itself is longer, and the material of cowl and 'panel', which is likewise of a piece, is unpatterned. In addition, the saint holds a staff in his left hand like an elongated *tau*-cross, with a sharp end like an arrow-head. (John writes of two 'mourners' who saw a site on which to found a monastery, and 'planted their cross there', which explains the sharpness of the end.⁷⁹)

From other illustrated manuscripts we gain an impression of the normal monastic habit.⁸⁰ The cowl may have been made differently, but most conspicuous is the all-enveloping outer garment, like a large blanket draped over the shoulders and covering the arms as far as the wrists, which comes down to the calves or even the ankles at the back. This is the *galo* or 'blanket', so called because it was in fact used at night for bedding. Underneath, presumably, is the *m'alyono*, another cloak, and under that the tunic, which can be seen from the knees down. Whether there was a 'front panel' attached to the cowl cannot be seen; probably there was not and this was a prerogative of 'mourners'. (It may be related to the embroidered panel of the 'great *skhēma*' worn by certain Greek Orthodox monks.) The distinctive shoulder-cape of the 'mourners' is presumably the cape (*kvinto*) possessed by Abay.

Thus it appears that the 'mourners' were distinguished from the other monks both by their dress and by their hair. Their activities were those of advanced athletes in the ascetical arena. Probably they entered this stage after a prolonged period of normal monastic discipline.⁸¹ Having 'graduated' they may either have left the community to embrace the rootless life of *xeniteia*⁸² or else have become quasi-hermits inside or outside their monastic enclosure. But however distinct this group may have been, John of Ephesus and his elder contemporary, John of Tella, give the impression that the

⁷⁷ Leroy, *Manuscripts*, pls. 52.2 and 60.2 (Leroy has slightly miscalculated the date of the earlier MS, which is now numbered 12/8 in the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate at Damascus); in the later MS the name of Matthew has been written over an erasure and it looks as if the original name was Baršawmo (*ibid.*, p. 259, where the 'panel' described below is called a scapular). ⁷⁸ Leroy, *Manuscripts*, pp. 260-1.

⁷⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [299]. ⁸⁰ Leroy, *Manuscripts*, pls. 71.2, 126.4.

⁸¹ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 158 (No. 17) [Nau, p. 84 (No. 17)] (early fifth century); *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 213: 'the higher calling of the solitary, whether he be a recluse or one who wanders over the hills... neither judging nor judged, may not be approached unless after subjection for several years to the will of the community' (twelfth century).

⁸² See A. Guillaumont, *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études* (5th section) 76 (1968-9), pp. 3-58; cf. n. 128 below.

practices associated with the 'mourners' had wider currency in the monastic communities.

By night some would stand in rows with the aid of standing-posts; others, without using posts, would crucify their bodies against the walls all night long; others used ropes and hanging-rings from the vineyard, fixed to the ceiling of the chamber, to suspend themselves all night by the armpits in a standing position.⁸³

So John speaks of the 'secret labours of the night' for which he elsewhere specifies that separate cells existed within the enclosure.⁸⁴ John of Tella at his first entrance to the monastery of Mor Zakay near Kallinikos requested a small hut in the enclosure, where he devoted himself to scriptural reading, prayer, sleeplessness and tears. He also gave up bread and wine and oil and confined himself to boiled pulse and a few vegetables.⁸⁵ In his Rule, he says that monks should wear hair tunics to show that they were in mourning (*avilutho*) for the Passion of Christ.⁸⁶ John of Ephesus tells how cells were built inside the great *triclinia* of the palace of Hormisdas in Constantinople out of wood, skins and matting;⁸⁷ this suggests a way in which separate cells might have been created even in a less makeshift monastery. Likewise, John of Tella was imprisoned 'in a small hut which was within a certain chamber' of a monastery near Antioch.⁸⁸ Archaeologists should therefore beware of drawing conclusions from the apparent absence of such compartments in a ruined abbey, where wood may have disappeared without trace.

Personal choice played a large part in sixth-century monastic life, even within the context of a cenobitic community. John of Ephesus again and again used the phrase *gvo le(h)*, 'he chose for himself', of a monk who works out his own vocation; whether by carrying a pebble in his mouth to impede his tongue; or by wearing a string with three knots biting deep into the skin of his hand to remind him of the need to guard the frontier between his soul and invading forces from without; or by cleaning the excrement from the latrines; or by collecting the scraps from the scullery and making them into a tasty meal for the poor at the gate; or by performing a ministry of exorcism. John himself could never have written the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* if he was bound by a vow of stability. Occasionally, such individual initiatives created a disturbance in the common life and then it was the senior elders who remonstrated with the individual. The abbot himself, though he may have been a spiritual father to some, is a distant figure in John's pages. Spiritual guidance is undertaken by other monks whose way of life has attracted disciples and, generally, by the Elders.

Something of the flexibility of an association of like-minded ascetics was still present in John's time. Like the founding fathers, who adopted the framework of a common life and put themselves under an abbot to attain greater freedom from material concern and a degree of mutual support and beneficial competition,⁸⁹ the monks of John's time retained considerable autonomy and, as elders, had a quasi-collegiate part in the

⁸³ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [410]. ⁸⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [204]. ⁸⁵ *L. John of Tella*, p. 46.

⁸⁶ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 151 (No. 11) [Nau, p. 25 (No. 11)]. ⁸⁷ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [476].

⁸⁸ *L. John of Tella*, p. 88.

⁸⁹ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [405]; cf. LVII.13 (section 1 of the *Life of Gabriel* is closely modelled on John of Ephesus); the distinction between good and bad envy goes back to Hesiod, *Erga*, lines 11f and was probably imbibed from one of the popular anthologies by the hellenizing John of Ephesus.

government of the community. This sixth-century 'Amidene' formula is equally far removed from authoritarianism and from the idiorhythmic style.⁹⁰ The separate cells and the extreme ascetical practices were combined with a dependence on common provisions and a devotion to common worship; and the superior good of the community was held above that of the individual.

How general this pattern was in John of Ephesus' time is difficult to judge. At Kallinikos, John bar Qursos had lived out a 'Nazirite' vocation in the monastery of Mor Zakay; he later wrote a Rule for that monastery, of which the surviving part is a condemnation of the practice of giving extra communion wafers to the 'outstanding Nazirites' (*nizir d-pushono*) in the abbey, apparently a distinct group of strict fasters.⁹¹ It would seem that the Amidene formula was not restricted to that region. What is certain is that, in the early fifth century, opposition to it existed in the Edessene area. Bishop Rabbula ruled that:

Monks should not grow their hair long, nor wear iron, nor suspend themselves. These practices should be reserved for those who are recluses and never emerge to go to any place.⁹²

Another Rule from the same milieu sums up this position:

It is not fitting that there should be a recluse within a monastic enclosure in a great abbey, nor that there should be two types of monastic life in the same monastery.⁹³

4. Monasticism in the seventh-century *Life of Theodosios of Amida*

The *Life of Theodosios* casts much light on a wide area in a dark period. Theodosios was a native of Ingilene, like John of Ephesus. He was trained as a monk at Qenneshe on the Euphrates; spent five years with the Desert Fathers in Egypt; returned to spend some years at the monastery of Zuqin near Amida, where he met his biographer; spent five years in the small monastery of Mor Sergius d-Fathyo in the region of Claudia; visited the monastery of Qartmin in Tur Abdin and, after his brief tenure of the episcopate in Amida and a visit to Qenneshe and the monastery of Mor Daniel of Aglhos, ended his life in the monastery of Mor Abay above Qeleth. His *Life* is therefore a rich source of information about monasticism in the seventh century.

As a boy he made the rounds of the Amidene monasteries (he may have been about fifteen years of age) until he found, at Zuqin, a monk from Qenneshe, to whom he attached himself as a disciple and who gave him the monastic habit.⁹⁴ Already we can see the same flexibility as in John of Ephesus: boys are acceptable guests; distinguished monks, though attached to a community, may roam around and acquire disciples.

⁹⁰ On the idiorhythmic life of certain monks on Athos, see Sherrard, *Athos, the Holy Mountain* (1982), pp. 67–70. Sherrard is mistaken in saying that this phenomenon is unknown elsewhere, since it is described in John of Martin's preface to his Rule for the Saffron Monastery (*Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 211–17; there is unexpected humour in John's satire on this kind of monk, whom he describes as a slave to Mistress Caution, running back early from church in case she should boil over and miscarry her daughter).

⁹¹ *Can. Mor Zakay*.

⁹² *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 157 (No. 5) [Nau, p. 83 (No. 5)].

⁹³ *Can. Rabbula*, No. 30 (the case made out by Vöbus for placing the Rule in another century altogether is a specious one and it may even be correctly attributed by the MSS to Rabbula); cf. Vöbus, *Asketicon*, II, pp. 301–7, pointing the contrast with Cappadocian and Pachomian coenobitism.

⁹⁴ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 58a.1–2, 68b.2.

whom they admit on their own authority to the monastic life. As a monk of Qenneshe himself, Theodosios undertook to visit the poor and the sick outside – and even at a distance from – the monastery, taking with him loaves of bread blessed by the abbot.⁹⁵ There came a point when he felt ready to leave the community, but the resident patriarch, Theodore (d. 666/7), persuaded him to stay one more year, because he foresaw that his own death was near.⁹⁶ During this year Theodosios spent the days praying in a secret cave overlooking the Euphrates, returning only at the evening gong, when all the monks foregathered in the patriarch's cell for his blessing.⁹⁷ The nights he spent visiting the sick within the monastery. At this stage, though as yet unordained, Theodosios clearly possessed a status above that of the 'brothers' – perhaps he was already an 'elder' – since he addresses the 'head of the brothers' (*rish alie*, a term which does not occur before the seventh century) as 'my son' and gives him an administrative task.⁹⁸

True to his promise, though not apparently bound by any rule, Theodosios stayed for the funeral of the patriarch Theodore, then made a pilgrimage to Sinai, Jerusalem and Egypt.⁹⁹ A penitent whom he encountered was to make a yearly round of the Mesopotamian monasteries to seek him out.¹⁰⁰ At the monastery of Zuqin, after his return from Egypt, Theodosios busied himself with making patchwork tunics and capes for the poor and the needy monks. He also taught 'strangers and brothers' about 'the fear of God', and coached them in singing anthems.¹⁰¹ He collected wood in the hills to light fires for the travellers and poor men camping at the gate. Among these was a sick woman whom he made his special care. When she became too ill to lie outside the gate, he carried her around a nearby village on his back until he found a woman who would look after her for payment. This he provided himself and he continued visiting the woman there.¹⁰² When visitors came to the monastery to see him, he was often to be found cleaning out the stables and the yards; he took his visitors into the oratory to speak with them.¹⁰³

Later, at the monastery of Mor Sergius d-Fathyo, Theodosios told the abbot he was breaking God's law by allowing a Nestorian to sit at table with the monks and pray in the oratory. The man was an easterner, but the abbot had not questioned him too closely, because he was useful to the community as a carpenter.¹⁰⁴ Other outsiders had been welcomed for similar reasons and with a similar lack of precaution: the deacon whom the abbot put in charge of the vineyard finished by raping the young 'brother' who was sent to help him, and the blacksmith who knew how to extract iron from the surface ore in the mountains had used this skill to obtain refuge in the monastery, although he was guilty of two murders in his homeland.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁵ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 58a.3.

⁹⁶ *loc. cit.*

⁹⁷ *loc. cit.*; the same custom is kept by the abbots of some monasteries on Mt. Athos.

⁹⁸ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 58b.3–59a.1.

⁹⁹ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 59a.1–60a.1.

¹⁰⁰ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 59b.2; pilgrimage to monasteries was a recognized penance at that time.

¹⁰¹ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 60b.1.

¹⁰² *loc. cit.*; nothing quite like this is quoted in Vöbus, *Einiges über die karitative Tätigkeit* (1947), a thorough compilation of details relevant to monastic charity in the Syrian East. The charity of the Christians in a society without welfare services was one of the factors contributory to their success in converting the Roman world and, since the missionaries who converted Tur Abdin were monks, this aspect of the monastic vocation helps to explain their early conquest of this region, which was discussed at the end of Ch. 1.

¹⁰³ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 60b.1.

¹⁰⁴ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 61a.1–2, b.2–3.

¹⁰⁵ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 62a.1–2.

Leaving Claudia under the threat of hostilities between the Byzantines and the Arabs, Theodotos skirted the diocese of Amida on the north side and came down via a monastery outside Mayperqaṭ to Ṭur 'Abdin, where he stayed for some time in the monastery of Mor Simeon of Qartmin. He and his disciple were given a cell where they lived in all simplicity; Theodotos showed great endurance in fasting and standing and silence. The elders tried to persuade him to go in with them to the Refectory, but he refused.¹⁰⁶ After leaving Qartmin, he was persuaded by the governor of Dara, through whose territory he was travelling, to settle at the monastery of Mor Abay above Qelesh under his jurisdiction.¹⁰⁷ Theodotos and his disciple built themselves a little cell by a cave which he identified as the original martyrion of Mor Abay, but he came down from time to time to worship in the oratory of the monastery. Here again the abbot had been lax in questioning those who asked to live there: an old man, who had been there for twenty years and had passed as a Christian, confessed to Theodotos that he had never been baptized.¹⁰⁸

Near the end of his life Theodotos returned to the 'cave of saints' above Mor Abay and, with the permission of his friend, the governor of Dara, he built a monastery there and a church in it dedicated to St Mary.¹⁰⁹ In the martyrion he deposited the relics he had been collecting all his life, which he carried in a sack.

Relics were clearly of great importance in the seventh century.¹¹⁰ While on his last journey towards Qelesh, Theodotos had nearly died in the monastery of Mor Daniel of Aghlosh; the monks were afraid, foreseeing the carnage which would ensue over the possession of his corpse. But 'Mor Abgar the Visitor (*so'uro*)' had sent Theodotos to the monastery of Mor Abay on a litter carried by four monks, thus putting him beyond reach of the Amidenes, for it was from that quarter that trouble was expected. Relics do not play an important part in John of Ephesus, who never mentions the ritual veneration of the saints of a monastery, a custom treated as normal in the *Life of Theodotos*.

Section 14 of the *Life of Simeon* contains an account of the battle which took place between the monks of Qartmin and the people of Qartmin village in the mid-fifth century over the possession of Simeon's relics. The *Calendar* commemorates on 6 October 'the ten Qartminite monks who are called the Little Brothers and the 483 martyrs', but it seems the passage is corrupt, because 483 was the number of the skulls removed in 443 from the burial vault, according to the *Chronicle of 819* (AG 755), an event which the *Life of Simeon* found commemorated on 7 October (Lrv.4). If the original commemoration was of twenty casualties in a battle with Qartmin village (cf. LIII.6-7, 15-16), that would have been sufficient to inspire section 14. The dating of the battle might then be a false inference from the fact that the skull count of 443 was commemorated on the following day.

If, in spite of this possible exception, it may stand as a general characterization of the seventh century that it saw a particular accentuation of the cult of relics among the

¹⁰⁶ *L. Theodotos*, foll. 62b.1-63a.3. ¹⁰⁷ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 63b.1.

¹⁰⁸ *L. Theodotos*, foll. 63b.1-2, 66b.3. ¹⁰⁹ *L. Theodotos*, foll. 66b.3-67a.2.

¹¹⁰ cf. *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 265 (Nos. [37], [38]) [Nau, p. 47 (Nos. 20, 21)]; the Host was considered by some priests in the time of Jacob of Edessa to cancel the miraculous power of relics; they would not consecrate it near relics for fear of rendering them powerless.

Syrians, this fact may mean that the age of the living holy man was already drawing to its close. Even Theodotos considered himself impotent without his bag of bones. His imitators were to become a public nuisance in the eighth and ninth centuries: the canons repeatedly condemn those who make a living as mobile reliquaries.¹¹¹

Theodotos took care to provide his new monastery with a 'buried treasure of saints' comparable to St Thomas the Apostle's 'presence' at Qenneshre and that of Mor Barṣawmo at the monastery of that name in Claudia. He acceded to the request that the monastery should receive brothers whom their parents had given to God by a vow; but it sounds as if this was a concession, since he did it 'in order to get the place under cultivation'.¹¹²

As in the time of John of Ephesus, we encounter 'solitaries, stylites and recluses' around Amida and a famous stylite, Thomas, near Tella.¹¹³ Theodotos himself and Joseph together adopted a life of 'voluntary exile' (*akhsnoyutho*), which seems to have meant moving from monastery to monastery and living in each a life apart, though having some contact with the inmates.¹¹⁴ In his final prayer on his deathbed, Theodotos mentioned 'all those who are in a monastery and in the holy order of solitaries and mourners' and compared them to Serapion and Julian the Old and Mor Barṣawmo. It seems that he may be drawing a distinction between 'solitaries and mourners', an order apart, and 'those who live in a monastery'. But the *Life* does not say whether the former might also at times have been accommodated in a monastery, unless Theodotos and Joseph during their temporary residence in the monastery of Qartmin and in a cell above that of Mor Abay count as such.

5. Evidence from Ṭur 'Abdin

a. Texts and inscriptions

Neither John of Ephesus nor the biographer of Theodotos set out to give a complete description of monasticism in their time. But together they provide a framework with some hints of historical change for a region adjacent to Ṭur 'Abdin. Our next task is to try to fit the scattered evidence from our own area into this model. If this generates no difficulties, we shall be justified in assuming that the pattern was found here, too.

We have seen that the genesis of the community at Qartmin was very similar to that of John the Urṭian at Amida and that, both in the region of that city and in Ṭur 'Abdin, the spirit of the original group of hermitages somehow survived the inevitable growth of the monastery's organizational complexity and its accumulation of functions, educational, charitable, disciplinary, economic. The institution did not function like a beehive, although it had the firm rhythm of a common life. Diversity of vocation was recognized and accepted and for the many paths there were many masters, who might take personal responsibility for the admission and training of their followers. Not only different varieties of approach to the coenobitic life, but even a separate order of quasi-

¹¹¹ The earliest such canon is that of George of the Arabs (d. 724).

¹¹² *L. Theodotos*, fol. 67a.1: *a(y)kh da-nshaymo(h) l-dhuktho*.

¹¹³ *L. Theodotos*, foll. 64b.1, 67a.3; cf. *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 156; cf. p. 165 [Chabot, p. 11; cf. p. 18], with false date (AG 1021), correct in *Chr. Qartmin 819* (d. AG 1010). ¹¹⁴ See n. 82.

eremitical 'Nazirites' or 'mourners', distinguished from the shaven-headed monks by their uncut hair and special clothing, had their place inside the walls of the enclosure. The commitment to monasticism was irrevocable, but boundaries between different types of monasticism were passable, nor was there any objection to the absolute departure of a spiritually mature monk from the coenobitic environment. Some went out as true hermits, stylites or holy vagabonds; others, especially in the early period, as missionaries. Having gone out of one monastery, they might dwell for extended periods in others, where they were given their own cell and allowed to pursue their chosen vocation. It was a flexible model, in which discipline was recognized as a necessary corollary of the mutually advantageous common life, but in which individually chosen masters were entrusted with the spiritual direction of men who, once trained, were at liberty to pursue their own course, so long as it did not disturb the whole community. The catalogue of holy men in the *Life of Samuel* focusses on outstanding individuals; we can now see how the pattern of community life allowed them to display their individuality. The originality of this model shines out by comparison with the segregatory and 'militaristic' approaches of the Cappadocian fathers and of their precursor, Pachomius.

An early sixth-century inscription at Qartmin¹¹⁵ mentions an abbot (*rishdayro*), a priest (*qashisho*), and a priested visitor (*qashisho w-so'uro*), all probably inmates of the monastery. This shows that the office of monastery 'visitor', which was regular in the Edessene area in the early fifth century and which John of Ephesus mentions for Syria and the *Life of Theodosios* for the region of Amida, was current in Tur 'Abdin in 534. Rabbula stipulates¹¹⁶ that only the 'visitor' shall enter the villages and cities; that he shall stay in a church or a monastery and not with lay people; that he shall not wear haircloth outside the monastery, for fear that the dignity of the habit be impaired thereby; and that monks should not drink wine. It is amusing to find two of these canons blithely ignored by the inventor of the tale in section 5 of the *Life of Simeon*.¹¹⁷ More significant is the fact that 'all the inhabitants of the area, men and women together' assembled for Samuel's funeral, while at that of Simeon 'a vast number of people from the cities and the villages' were present (XXXII.9; LI.4). In the contemporary Rule of Rabbula this is specifically forbidden: the funeral should be performed by the monks alone.¹¹⁸ The same went for commemorations; and women were under no circumstances to enter a monastery.¹¹⁹ But John of Tella is already more tentative in his advice against what was clearly an ingrained practice, for he adds 'so that all suspicion be removed from you'.¹²⁰ It is noteworthy that, by the end of the seventh century, Theodosios feels he must make an exception: 'Women shall not enter this monastery, except on the commemoration of the saints who are buried here'.¹²¹

Amianus Marcellinus mentions nuns in a mountain fort between Amida and Mardin (xviii.10.4), 'virgins consecrated to divine service according to the Christian

¹¹⁵ *INSCR. A.1.* ¹¹⁶ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, pp. 156-7 (Nos. 2-4, 6) [Nau, p. 83 (Nos. 2-4, 6)].

¹¹⁷ XXXV.1-xxxix.10, the most memorable section of this *Life* from a purely literary point of view. The monk, who appears to be a *so'uro* (xxxv.2, suggesting, perhaps, that the word should be translated as 'executive' rather than 'visitor' (Vööbels) or 'overseer' (McCallough), *A Short History of Syriac Christianity*, p. 73), stays the night with laymen and drinks wine with his host, thus giving the latter's young daughter an occasion to attempt his seduction.

¹¹⁸ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 156 (No. 1) [Nau, p. 83 (No. 1)].

¹¹⁹ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 151 (No. 11) [Nau, pp. 24-5 (No. 11)].

¹²¹ *L. Theodosios*, fol. 67b.2.

custom', whom Shabunr, the Persian king, captured; and John of Ephesus bears occasional witness to the existence of nunneries. But it is not until the tenth century that an inscription in Tur 'Abdin provides evidence of nuns there.¹²² The silence is, of course, far from conclusive in records written by monks who never had occasion to enter a nunnery. If there were nuns there (and they existed at Nisibis around 700¹²³), their active social function may have been to foster waifs and orphans, though boys would not have been allowed to stay after a certain age. Thus a response of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) to the priest Addai numbers it among the duties of a deaconess in a monastery to administer the Eucharistic Mysteries 'to her sister-nuns or to small children'.¹²⁴ and a synodical canon of the year 878 lays down that no male over seven years of age shall enter an enclosed community of women.¹²⁵ It might therefore be an indication of the absence of nunneries in Tur 'Abdin that the writer of section 5 of the *Life of Simeon* imagines an illegitimate child being born inside the monastery of Qartmin and being taken to a nearby village for fostering (xxxvii.9-11).¹²⁶

The monks of Qartmin were shaven-headed in the time of Rabbān Gabriel 'the Cow', abbot of a Nestorian monastery on Mt Izlo in the seventh century. This was the ancient custom, as the Rule of Rabbula and John of Ephesus show; but the Nestorians, after the late sixth-century reforms of Abraham of Kashkar, were distinguished by a central tonsure, like that of 'penitents' in the time of John of Ephesus.¹²⁷

The *Life of Gabriel* is a problematic source; but part of it may be valid for the seventh century, and all, except what is borrowed from John of Ephesus, was composed against the background of monastic life in Tur 'Abdin. Gabriel himself started his career at Qartmin as a recluse, in keeping with the 'model' described in John of Ephesus (lxvii.9-11).¹²⁸ In sections 13 and 14, the refectory (*beth i'ume*), the duty-monks (*shabthoye*), the latrines (*beth igro*, *beth mayo*, *hshahio*) and the rules (*qonune*, *nomme*) laid down for the behaviour of the community fit in well with John of Ephesus. In section 19 (lxxxii.5-6) we read that a madman was held by chains in the burial vault (*beth gadishe*), a custom confirmed by archaeological evidence in Tur 'Abdin and by textual witnesses from other parts of the Near East.¹²⁹ The same section describes how a huge

¹²² *INSCR. A.10*, in the late twelfth century there were so many nuns at Beth Svirina that ten rooms were built for them (*Book of Life*, in Baragwan, 74, p. 166).

¹²³ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 222 (Doabian, p. 137); summary, p. 177.

¹²⁴ *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 266 (No. 141) [Nau, p. 49 (No. 24)].

¹²⁵ The nunneries mentioned by Amianus was in a castle, after 392 (*Code of Theodosianus*, xvi.3.2; repelling xv.3.1. (390), a prohibition of monasteries in towns and villages; the nunneries tended to be in cities, for the same reason of security. *Chr. Gregory III*, col. 77, describes how nuns in Tur 'Abdin (*in*) clubbed Baragwan of Nisibis to death with the keys of their cells c.485, but the original report (*Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.96, p. 427) places this event in the area of Targit. Ceret argues, in *OC* 39 (1973), pp. 115-20, for the primary of the report in *Chr. Michael* 1195, while doubting its historicity (*ibid.*, n. 81).

¹²⁶ Thomas of Margra, ii.18, p. 90 [Bedjan, p. 86]; Thomas of Margra, 14, p. 23 [Bedjan, p. 11].

¹²⁷ In this connection, note that Add. MS 17.210/17.211 of the British Library, dated 768-835, was written by Simeon, a priest and recluse, who is in the holy abbey of the House of Mor Simeon of Qartmin (fol. 53a); a rather different case is Add. 14.649, written in the ninth century by Joseph, a brother from the holy abbey of the House of Mor Simeon of Qartmin, while he was in spiritual exile (*lakkhanyuhol*) (fol. 205); see Wright, *MSS London*, pp. 550, 553.

¹²⁸ Bell, *Amruah to Amruah* (1911), p. 313, found a collar and chain on the wall of a room in the monastery of Mor Malka and was told that men afflicted with fits or madness were still brought there for a cure; at the Monastery of the Cross, near the tomb of Mor Aho, there is an iron ring in the ground to which such a chain might have been attached; see also Gregory Barhebraeus, *The Languable Stories*, ed. Wallis Budge (1896), p. 131 (No. 632); V. Rochemau, *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 28 (1978), pp. 213-14.

stone kneading-trough was made and transported to the abbey (this actually occurred in 776/7; cf. *INSCR.* A.6); here is palpable evidence of centralized food-production. Section 15 tells of a refectory on a level above the 'temple' (the conventual church) which contained twelve broad tables of white marble (LXXV.3,5); the number is an allusion to the Last Supper. The monks used to go straight up after 'the prayer of *shorutho*' and sing an anthem before sitting down to eat. The word *shorutho* is usually found to mean the midday meal; but here it seems to be equated with *hshomitho* (LXXIV.16), the evening meal. This is explained by the fact that *shorutho* literally connotes a first break in the working day. In John of Ephesus we found no allusion to a midday meal; and grace before the evening meal was said at the individual tables.

The office of *rish ahe*, 'head of the brothers', does not appear in John of Ephesus. In the *Life of Theodotos* about the year 665 he is a relatively junior official in the abbey of Qenneshre, where there is also an abbot.¹³⁰ This is also attested for Tur 'Abdin in an inscription of the latter half of the eighth century, which lists the officers of the Monastery of the Cross as abbot (*rishdayro*), sacristan (*qunkhoyo*), head of the brothers (*rish ahe*), and administrator (*parnos*), in that order.¹³¹ At Qartmin Abbey in 784/5 an inscription names only the abbot, the administrator and the steward, but this may be because it deals with an economic affair, the building of a winepress.¹³² That there was a *rish ahe* at Qartmin is shown by an inscription which may also belong to the eighth century.¹³³ Section 23 of the *Life of Gabriel* claims election to this office for Gabriel in the year 613, about the time of Bishop Daniel's consecration.¹³⁴ Section 9 (LXVII.9-12) seems to equate it with the abbacy: 'the brothers (*ahe*) received him . . . and gave him a cell . . . and afterwards set him over themselves as *rish ahe*, and they all submitted to his command'.¹³⁵ At the beginning of section 10 (freely adapted from a source dated 775, where the story was told about a bishop of Edessa¹³⁶) Gabriel is called *rish 'umro*, 'head of the abbey' (LXVII.17), and it is implied that this is synonymous with the office of *rish ahe* mentioned in the previous section. But there is no reason to think that these sections were written with any knowledge of conditions in Gabriel's time. It is only safe to rely on section 23, where Gabriel is not specifically given the office of abbot at all, though, like Daniel, he exercised that function together with that of bishop.¹³⁷

An inscription of the early eleventh century¹³⁸ names Bishop John, whom we know to have resided in the abbey; the builders, both monks; and Kulaib, the *rish ahe*. In this case, there can have been no reason to exclude the abbot's name, so either he did not exist or *rish ahe* means 'abbot' here.¹³⁹ There were abbots of Qartmin in the eighth century. Athanasius of Nunib was abbot from 718/19 to 743/4, during which time there

¹³⁰ *L. Theodotos*, foll. 58a.3, 58b.3-59a.1, 66a.3. ¹³¹ *INSCR.* B.9. ¹³² *INSCR.* A.8.

¹³³ *INSCR.* C.5.

¹³⁴ LXXXVIII.5-6; cf. p. 157. 613 was the year of the Persian conquest; it is possible that the *Chronicle of 819* has put Daniel's consecration one year too late and that Gabriel's promotion was somehow linked to this event.

¹³⁵ The same equation is made in the *Life of Samuel* at xxxii.5-6, but the choice of words here may be that of a later redactor. ¹³⁶ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, pp. 160-3 [Chabot, pp. 15-17].

¹³⁷ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 945, 954[b]. ¹³⁸ *INSCR.* B.12.

¹³⁹ The latter is perhaps more probable in view of the equation of the two offices in some passages of the *Qartmin Trilogy*; however, John of Mardin, whose monastic formation was in the Mountain of Edessa, understood the term *rish ahe* in its old sense in his twelfth-century *Rule for the Monastery of Mor Hananyo* (see n. 149 below).

were at least two bishops of Tur 'Abdin who surely resided at the abbey.¹⁴⁰ In 757/8 'Abbas Mor Gabriel, abbot' commemorated his building effort with an inscription;¹⁴¹ but history suggests he enjoyed a nominal episcopal autonomy from the bishop of Tur 'Abdin, who at that time, exceptionally, resided elsewhere.¹⁴² He was, therefore, explicitly, both abbot and resident bishop at Qartmin; for we must understand 'Abbas' as a quasi-episcopal title here, unless we are to find fault with the chronicler. It is not certain whether, by 784/5, the patriarch George had restored the unity of the diocese of Tur 'Abdin with its bishop resident at Qartmin;¹⁴³ but there is no doubt that there was a bishop there at that date and that his presence did not preclude that of an abbot, for the 'winepress' inscription makes this clear.¹⁴⁴ The abbot Denho mentioned there is likely to be identical with an abbot of the same name in an undated inscription discovered in the charnel-house;¹⁴⁵ and the same building contains a second abbot's name, Isaiah, of uncertain date.¹⁴⁶ But all this evidence of abbots together with bishops at Qartmin is for a period after the seventh century. It cannot disprove the hypothesis that the bishop subsumed the abbacy at that time. Indeed, without doing violence to the other evidence about the office of *rish ahe*, we can hardly avoid this hypothesis, for to do so would be to equate Gabriel's election as 'head of the brothers' with his election to the abbacy, when other evidence distinguishes these two offices. Besides, it seems unlikely that Gabriel can have held the abbacy, with priested monks under him, while he himself was only a deacon.¹⁴⁷ The *Chronicle of 819* explicitly states¹⁴⁸ that he succeeded Daniel 'as bishop and as abbot of Qartmin' in 634.

The best explanation of the term *rish ahe* is that suggested by the Rule for the monastery of Mor Hananyo (the Saffron monastery) by John of Mardin. There he is named, with the abbot and the administrators only, as one of those authorized to assign duties in the community; at another point the monks are enumerated as 'all the priests and the brothers'.¹⁴⁹ The term 'brothers', therefore, while it might occasionally be used in the broader sense to mean 'monks', also had a narrower connotation of 'unpriested monks' and the *rish ahe* was head of these. This makes good sense of all the evidence, if taken together with the hypothesis that, at times, a resident bishop stood *in loco abbatis*.

Even the offending section 9 of the *Life of Gabriel* might, with some difficulty, be accommodated. To do so, we should have to take *ahe* once in the broad sense and thereafter in the narrow sense, although the object would thus be metamorphosed without being repeated or redefined. But it is not really so difficult, if we allow that the writer just puts things rather loosely. Such an interpretation suggests that the author had in mind the twofold division of the monks as priests and non-priests when he wrote that Gabriel 'entered and was blessed by the blessed ones (*juvone*) in the abbey and by all the brotherhood' (LXVII.6). Perhaps *juvone* here means 'priested or otherwise distinguished monks'. In the *Life of Theodotos*, also of the seventh century, we find the same phrase: 'the *juvone* of the monastery and the whole brotherhood'.¹⁵⁰ But at other times in the same text *juvone* seems to be a synonym for 'monk', while *ahe* ('brother')

¹⁴⁰ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 1030; see pp. 162, 168. ¹⁴¹ *INSCR.* A.3. ¹⁴² See p. 31.

¹⁴³ See pp. 174, 177. ¹⁴⁴ *INSCR.* A.8. ¹⁴⁵ *INSCR.* C.10. ¹⁴⁶ *INSCR.* C.7.

¹⁴⁷ LXXXVIII.5-7. ¹⁴⁸ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 954[b].

¹⁴⁹ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 222 (No. 10) and 225 (No. 18), cf. XLVIII.18-XLIX.4.

¹⁵⁰ *L. Theodotos* fol. 58b.2.

can be interpreted generally as 'junior monk' and only occasionally has its broader sense, as when Theodotos on his death-bed takes leave of 'all the brothers of the abbey'. Both at Qenneshre and at Qartmin the *Life of Theodotos* attests a distinct group of 'Elders', associated in dignity and in authority with the abbot. At one point¹⁵¹ 'the brothers of the abbey' (of Qenneshre) are distinguished sharply from the 'Elders', so perhaps the latter group included all the priests.

The office of sacristan (*qunkhoyo*) – literally (the monk) attached to the *konkhē* or 'apse' of the sanctuary – which is attested by the eighth-century inscription at the Monastery of the Cross, is not mentioned in John of Ephesus. If we may 'take a back-bearing' on the twelfth-century rule of the abbey of Mor Hananyo, it was one of his duties to allot liturgical 'parts' in the services to the various priests: 'The sacristan shall give instructions to the priests about *sedhre* and the Eucharist, and prayers and readings, and homilies; and he shall remind them of their duty in the morning early'.¹⁵² It was also his duty to sound the gong (*noqusho*) for prayers.¹⁵³ We read in Brooks' translation of John of Ephesus of a 'bellman',¹⁵⁴ but the Syriac word is *noqusho*, which means 'gong' (not a round gong, as in the Far East, but more likely a simple plate of metal, the nearest equivalent today is the *sēmantron* of the Greek monasteries, which can also be a resonant beam of wood¹⁵⁵). Brooks was misled by the intransitive use of the verb *nqash*, meaning 'it rang out', not 'he sounded (it)'. In fact the office of sacristan probably existed in John of Ephesus' time, for the *Life of Aho*, which is set in the sixth century, registers one in Tur 'Abdin itself. I quote the passage in full:

As for the first monastery, that of Bnoyel, it was as splendid as ever, until the fifth year after the death of the holy man. Then it happened by God's command on the eighteenth of April that a great gale accompanied by a cloud of heavy hail-stones smote that monastery and all the region. Everything was crushed and blighted – trees, vineyards, crops – and all the produce of that region was lost. So violent was the hail – like hard rocks – that many domestic animals and even men were killed. The subsequent floods swept away and ruined many a village. The hail returned again and again every year, ruining the region and destroying everything in those monasteries. The villages became deserted, and even the monks of the monasteries fled and were scattered, until the only ones left there were the blessed Heworo and ten of his companions, who were his fellow-villagers. Then the blessed ones decided to go down to the lower monastery; and they all arose and went down; and no-one remained in the upper monastery except the blessed Abraham, the sacristan. He would not consent to descend with them, but remained there on his own; and he would sit and compose lamentations over the monastery as did the prophet Jeremiah over Jerusalem. The region became desolate from the lack of people coming and going and was filled with every kind of wild animal.¹⁵⁶

It is possible that these events should be connected with the natural disasters which occurred in the region of Nisibis in 560. In any case, they help to explain why Tur 'Abdin left so little impression on the history of the sixth century.

John of Ephesus knew monastic stewards (*rabay bote*, sing. *rabbayto*), and this office is attested at Qartmin in 784/5 along with that of 'administrator' (*parnosos*), which is also

found at the Monastery of the Cross about the same time. How exactly their duties were divided is uncertain. The implication of the inscription at the Monastery of the Cross is that there was no steward there, so presumably his duties were performed by the administrator.¹⁵⁷ This may have been a transitional period, for after the eighth century there is no more evidence of stewards in Tur 'Abdin, whereas the administrators are very prominent in the twelfth-century Rule of the Saffron Monastery. There are to be two or three of them, elected as helpers to the abbot, but also as checks on his authority, for he may not do anything without consulting them, and they, unlike other monks, are exhorted to use their judgement in obeying his commands. Their specific duties include accounting for income and expenditure by keeping two books on a monthly basis. They also have to keep up a register of all the possessions of the community and of its church.¹⁵⁸

b. Archaeology

In the abbey of Qartmin there are at least two cells which were clearly designed for recluses living within the walls of the monastery. One, situated behind the sanctuary of the church of the Mother of God, has already been described.¹⁵⁹ The other is on the north side of the conventual church (figs. 29 and 30). The description of this church in section 2 of the *Life of Gabriel* shows that the hermit's cell was not an original part of its design and this is confirmed by the masonry: most of the cell is built in inferior stonework; the two arches incorporated in the north wall (at F and west of F) apparently belonged to an original portico on this side (cf. LXI.3–4); the fine masonry of the east wall (L) was intended to appear to be an organic continuation of the east wall of the tripartite sanctuary (cf. LX.2), but the division between the two is clearly visible (fig. 31); the passage through the north wall of the older building (A), which gives access to the cell complex, is improvised, not designed, and allows the joining-point of the two structures to be examined (M).

Entering the extension through this passage we find a small, vaulted sanctuary containing an altar (B), formed of two monoliths, with a step in front of it on the west side. A low bench in masonry is built against the north wall and, above it, high up under the vault, an opening leads into a tunnel (C) which runs several metres towards the west, in the thickness of the wall. This tunnel is now blocked up, but it originally connected with the upper part of the western half of the complex, for a reason which shall appear. There was once a small window in the east wall of the chapel, but it has been closed with masonry.¹⁶⁰ Opposite the altar in the west wall, an arched recess contains a doorway, which has been almost blocked up, leaving a tunnel (D) barely large enough to squeeze through.

The chamber which is thus entered is featureless, except for a low platform in the

¹⁵⁷ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [392], [395–413]; *INSCRR.* A.3, B.9. The disappearance of the term *so'uro* and the appearance of *parnosos* suggest that the latter replaced the former, the meaning of which may be similar (cf. n. 117 above). *Parnoso* is found as early as 509 in Br. Lib. Add. MS 14,542, fol. 94a; see Wright, *MSS London*, pl. IV. ¹⁵⁸ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 217–18 (No. 2), 222 (No. 10). ¹⁵⁹ Ch. 2, section 4, g.

¹⁶⁰ Small areas of hatched plaster in this chapel have been thought to have held a mosaic (Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 283), but they may simply be the intermediate rendering for the smooth lime plaster which covers the rest of the walls; in any case this chapel is not contemporary with the conventual church.

¹⁵¹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 66b.1. ¹⁵² *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 220 (No. 6).

¹⁵³ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 219 (No. 3). ¹⁵⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [254].

¹⁵⁵ R. Stichel, *CA* 21 (1971), pp. 213–38; the wooden plank-gong on Mt Athos is called *talanton*, *kopanos* or *haghion xylon*. ¹⁵⁶ *L. Aho*, foll. 190b–191a; cf. Vööbus, *Aha*, p. 11 n.9.

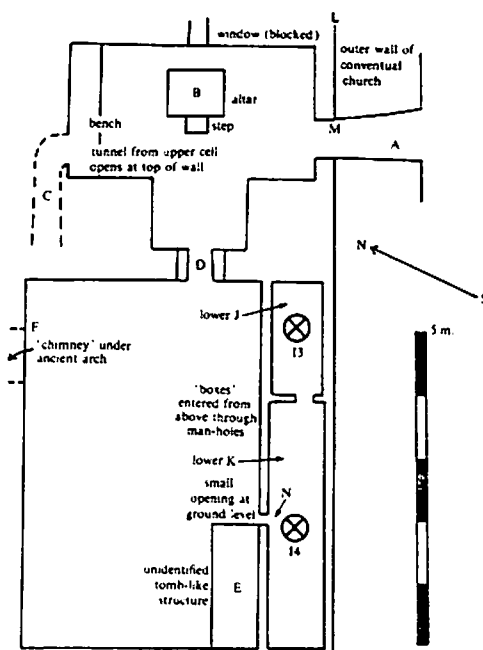


Fig. 29. Plan of the 'Cell of Gabriel', ground floor

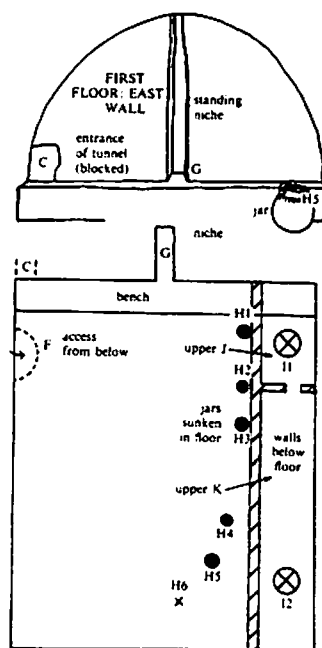


Fig. 30. Plan of the 'Cell of Gabriel', upper floor

south-west corner (E), thought by some (though not by the monks today) to be a tomb.¹⁶¹ Under the higher of the two arches in the north wall a roughly excavated 'chimney' (F) leads to the upper room; the walls of this 'chimney' and the underside of the arch are worn smooth by the passage of human bodies.

The upper room has a masonry bench along the east wall. In the centre of this wall, above the bench, is an alcove (G) 88 cm deep and as high as a man; it is 29.5 cm wide at the bottom and 22 cm wide at head-level. Like a similar niche in the ruins to the east of the conventual church, this alcove was certainly designed as an aid in perpetual standing. This practice, which the west Syrians believed to have been introduced by Mor Barṣawmo, is also attested by the *Life of Simeon Stylites* and by John of Ephesus.¹⁶² Rabbula mentions the associated practice of self-suspension, which he says should be reserved for recluses. In his adaptation of a panegyric by John of Ephesus, the final redactor of the *Life of Gabriel* may have had in mind the alcoves at Qartmin:

¹⁶¹ Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 9; Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (1895), p. 332, with plan on p. 334; cf. Preusser, *Baudenkmäler*, p. 33, who does not suggest any function for these 'Nebenräumen'. See also the plan in Dolapönü, *Deyr-el-umur tarihi* (1971), p. 10, where the chapel is marked 'leading to Mor Gabriel's cell of servitude' (*ibadethanesi*), the literal translation being appropriate here, if not, perhaps, intended.

¹⁶² See n. 83; cf. XL.18–XL.14; L. *Simeon Stylites*, p. 520; Theodoret, *Hist. Phil.*, xxvi.9.

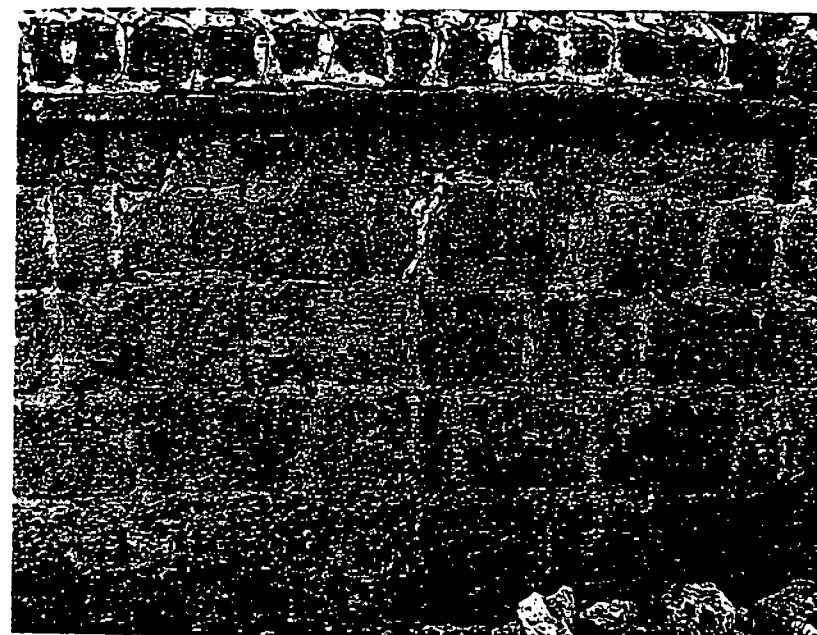


Fig. 31. North-east corner of conventual church, Qartmin (sixth century) and adjoining imitation (?eighth century), concealing juncture with sanctuary built on to the Cell of Gabriel

Others stood in narrow standing-places and others propped themselves against walls all night long without any other support. Others strung ropes beneath their armpits and suspended themselves. (LVII.14–17; cf. LL. *Eastern Saints*, p. [410])

The rationale of this practice, as expounded by the *Life of Barṣawmo*, is that no slave may lie down in the presence of his master; the true 'mourners' considered themselves literal slaves of an ever-present lord.¹⁶³

Above the bench, in the bottom left-hand corner of the east wall, can be seen the former opening of the tunnel, now blocked up with masonry (C). Sunken in the floor of the upper room are five jars (H1–5) and the trace of a sixth (H6) which has disappeared; one of the jars has recently been excavated. Near the south wall are two manholes (I1, I2). Letting himself down into that near the east wall the recluse could get into a box (J) 1.61 m × 0.77 m and 1.11 m high (max.), in the floor of which is another manhole (I3), giving access to a similar box 1.84 × 0.80 m and 1.26 m high (max.).¹⁶⁴ Both these boxes connect by narrow openings with boxes of similar width, but much greater length, to the west (K).¹⁶⁵ Access to the latter is through the second manhole in the floor of the upper

¹⁶³ L. *Barṣawmo*, fol. 72b.3 (not in summary).

¹⁶⁴ In the latter I saw, in 1984, a much-used sleeping-bag and a candle, evidence of the still popular practice of *incubatio ad sanctos*.

¹⁶⁵ Lower box: 4 m × 0.94 m, height 1.56 m (max.); upper box: 4.16 m × 0.89, height 1.116 m (max.).

room and a similar hole in the floor of the upper box. In the north wall of the lower box at ground level is a small opening (N), which can be seen next to the east end of the platform in the lower room of the cell.

All these curious arrangements are consonant with the requirements of a recluse. The jars in the floor would have contained supplies of dry pulses and water. The under-floor boxes must be a substitute for the pits in which Syrian ascetics used to 'bury' themselves.¹⁶⁶ They probably functioned also as latrines, it being a suitable mortification to sit in a putrid place. The little window in the lower western box would have allowed excrement to be passed out to a servant-monk. The 'chimney' would have been blocked up with masonry. The bench would have been for sitting on when the recluse was no longer able to stand in the alcove. The tunnel would have allowed him at the cost of a painful effort to bring his face near the opening above the chapel and so to be present unseen at the Eucharist, perhaps even to receive communion. Imagine the appearance of the faceless prisoner's emaciated and filthy hand, reaching out towards that Mystery, for the sake of which he had chosen to live in a dark and stinking pit, in all the abjection of the most inhuman slavery!¹⁶⁷

There can be no doubt that the community at Qartmin conformed to the Amidene pattern of monasticism, according to which recluses were accommodated in the heart of the coenobium. It also had its circle of cave- and tower-dwellers.¹⁶⁸ Caves and towers were favoured as pre-Christian Aramaic burial places. Smaller versions of the famous funeral towers of Palmyra are found in Northern Mesopotamia and even in Ṭur 'Abdin.¹⁶⁹ There are large numbers of cave tombs in Ṣalah, Mzizah and elsewhere in Ṭur 'Abdin. This suggests that the anchorites intentionally imitated the dead by the forms of their dwellings. St Antony was perhaps the first but by no means the only hermit to brave the hordes of demons that infested the tombs outside his village. But the motive of those who actually constructed or excavated such dwellings must have been somewhat different.

The contemplation of death is one of the duties of the monk.¹⁷⁰ Many Greek and

¹⁶⁶ e.g. Theodoret, *Hist. Phil.*, xxvi.6; MS Dam. 12/17, foll. 114a.3–116b.3: 'Mor John who finished his ascetic career in a well'; *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. 191–4; *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 228–9 (not in Dolabani or summary): Simeon lived for a year in a cistern at Fenek and for another year in a cistern at Habsenus, where his disciple Basil ministered to his needs.

¹⁶⁷ cf. xxxvii.13–17. An interpolation in the 1710 paraphrase of the *Life of Gabriel* in the *Berlin Paraphrase*, fol. 92a (at lxvii.10) has the following: 'There was in the cell in which he lived a pit [gubo], into which he would descend and where he would stay imprisoned for days, weeping. He became even more extreme in his asceticism than he had been before. As for his cell, behold, it is still standing today. They have made a way through to it from the great temple and have made it a sanctuary. There is an altar [thronos] there on which the Eucharist is celebrated'.

¹⁶⁸ There are a number of caves around the monastery where tradition plausibly asserts that monks lived (cf. xxiv.6–7; xxxvii.13–17). In the case of other monasteries (Dayr al-Za'farān and St Jacob by Ṣalah, for instance) this pattern is attested by sanctuaries and crosses carved in the rock of the caves and by inscriptions. The largest cave-hermitage near Ṣalah has a sanctuary dedicated to Mor Barṣawmo; the largest of those above the Saffron Monastery has a church dedicated to Jacob of Nisibis (Pognon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 72–5; Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, i, pl. XXIV).

¹⁶⁹ Bell/Mango, *T.A.*, pp. 28–9, 109; pls. 108–12; perhaps this was the original purpose of the fine ancient tower east of the church of Mor Sovo at Hah (*ibid.*, pp. 19, 53, 117; pl. 126).

¹⁷⁰ Procopius, *Buildings*, v.8 (on the monks of Mt Sinai): their life is a 'rehearsal for death' (*meletē thanatou*). We read in the Paris MS Syriac 235, fol. 80b, of 'a solitary who lived in a tree with a human skull hung in front of him'.

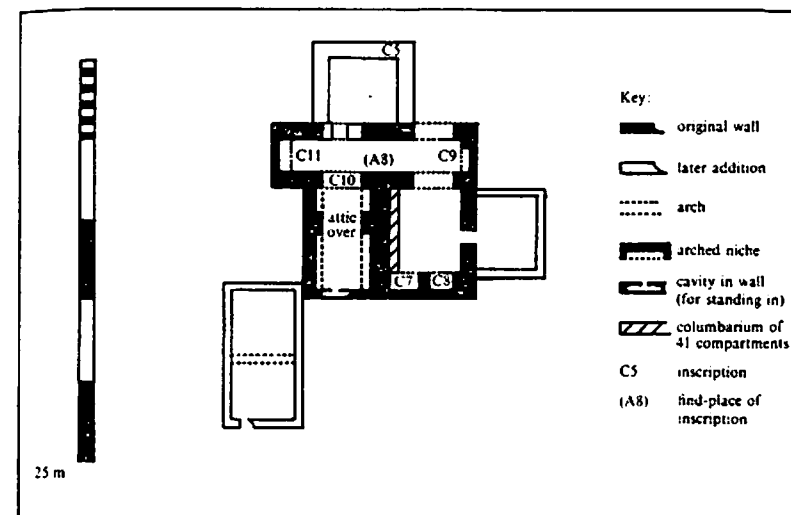


Fig. 32. Plan of the charnel-house at Qartmin, now called the 'Old Library', showing the positions of *INSCR.* C.5 and C.7–11 and the place where *INSCR.* A.8 was found (cf. fig. 55)

some European monasteries have charnel-houses where the bones of dead monks are stacked and their skulls displayed, often with an icon of the Resurrection.¹⁷¹ A charnel-house is mentioned in the *Life of Aho*: the Roman benefactor of the monastery of Bnoyel built a burial vault and a *beth nfošo* with a door of solid stone, symbol of eternity.¹⁷² The literal meaning of *beth nfošo* is 'house of clearing-out': in the *Chronicle of 819* and in parallel passages of the *Qartmin Trilogy* we read of at least two historic occasions when the burial vaults were cleared out and the skulls carefully counted.¹⁷³ The significance of this action is signalled by its inclusion among a very few other memorable events in an annalistic chronicle. Even if there were no traces of it, we might assume that there existed a special building in the monastery to accommodate these precious bones.

As it is, there is a ruined building near the north-east corner of the conventual church which can hardly be anything other than a charnel-house (fig. 32). It had no windows

¹⁷¹ I have seen such an arrangement at the monastery of Metamorfosis in Meteora, Thessaly, and have heard of it at St Catherine's on Sinai and at many monasteries on Mt Athos. ¹⁷² See Ch. 2, n. 37.

¹⁷³ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 756, 954(b); cf. LV.2–4, LXXXVIII.1–2. The author of the *Trilogy* probably did not know of another clearing-out subsequent to that of 643, but he placed that one a few years later to achieve a certain symmetry with the *Life of Simeon*. The number of skulls was 483 on the first occasion (misunderstood by *Cal. T.A.*, 6 Oct.) and 82 or 800 or (most likely) 802 on the second (see p. 62). The *Trilogy* claims there were 'more than 400' monks at Qartmin c.400 (XIX.8), 560 in c.420 (XLI.2), 708 in 433 (XLIX.6), and 798 in c.580 (LXIII.8; cf. LV.11). Whatever the value of these figures, what they suggest is confirmed (if it was not inspired) by *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 756 and 954(b): phenomenal growth in the late fourth and early fifth centuries (the figure of 483 dead before c.440 is another indication that the settlement antedated the 'official' foundation date). We cannot be certain that all countings of skulls have been recorded, but, if so, the second figure would suggest (even if we take 802 to have been the original reading) that the community thinned out in the post-Chalcedonian period considerably.



Fig. 33. The 'Old Library', interior, showing the columbarium for the exposition of skulls

and was added to again and again in the course of the centuries. In one of its walls are a number of masonry compartments (41 in all), which must have served to display the skulls, not one skull in each, but several, without the jaw-bone, piled on one another (fig. 33). It is not easy to determine the history of this building, in spite of the presence under its arches of a number of plaster-moulded inscriptions.¹⁷⁴

Another archaeological witness to ascetical practice at Qartmin is the rectangular Hermit's Tower, which stands c. 250 m to the west of the ruins on the crest of the hill (figs. 34–36).¹⁷⁵ It would have made a good watchtower in times of danger, but a closer examination shows that this was not the purpose – or not the only purpose – for which it was built.¹⁷⁶ The tower is perfectly oriented. It consists of three cells built of hewn

¹⁷⁴ *JNSCR*, C.7–11.

¹⁷⁵ See pl. on p. 32 of Dolapović, *Dejstvo i umur tarhi* (1971); the legend attached to this tower is retold by Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (1893), pp. 214–16.

¹⁷⁶ *Pace Mango*, in Bell/Mango, *T.4*, p. 137; the intention of the building was correctly understood by P. Castellan, in Peña, *Les Reclus syriens* (1980), pp. 300–1, although he failed to discover the lowest cell.

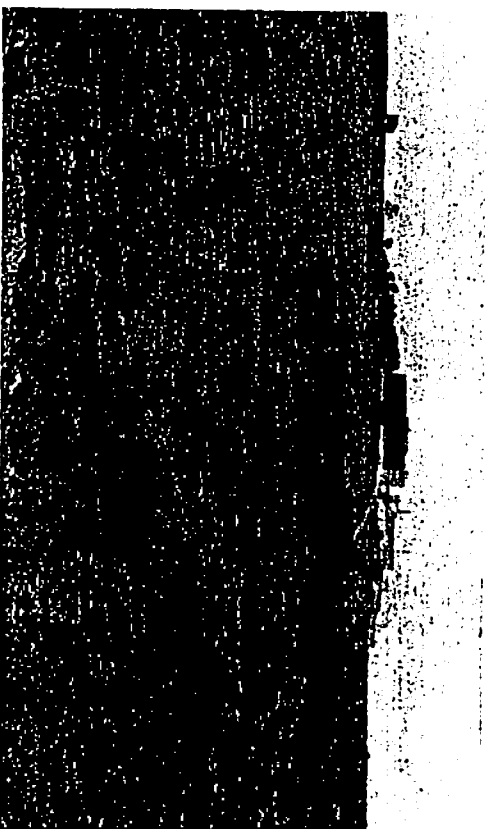


Fig. 34. View of the abbey of Qartmin from the direction of the eponymous village, showing the Hermit's Tower to the west of the abbey



Fig. 35. The Hermit's Tower, seen through arch in ancient enclosure-wall, over roof of cistern

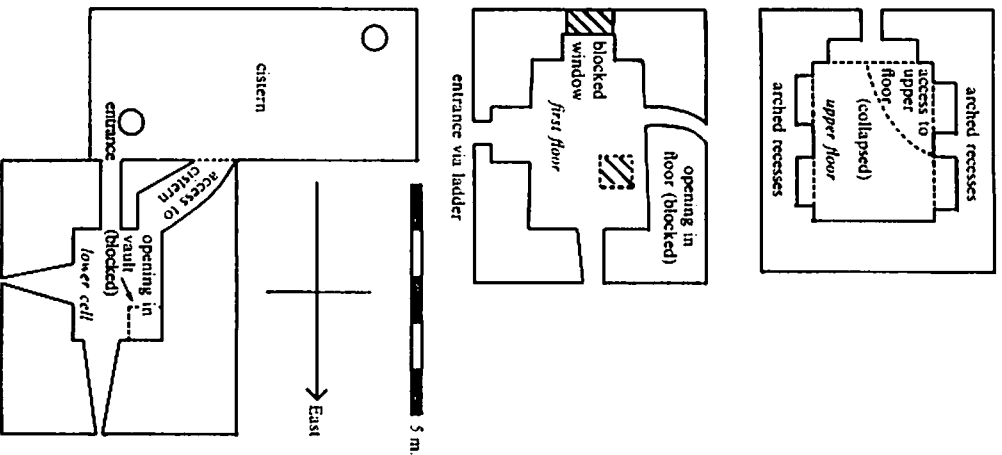


Fig. 36. Plan of the Hermit's Tower

stone, one above the other, the walls tapering from more than 1.50 m thickness at the bottom to 1.10 m at the top. The walls of the upper storey were further lightened by the construction of arched recesses. The top storey and the ceiling of the middle storey are partly ruined and it is no longer possible to see how these two floors communicated with one another. It may be that a ladder was used. Certainly a ladder was needed to enter the middle storey: there was no way in from below and it seems that the large window on the

south side originally stood more than the height of a man above the ground. The purpose of a broad window on the west side of the middle storey, which was later carefully blocked up, is uncertain; it may have been used to raise water from the cistern below.

The lowest cell in the tower is entered through a rough opening on the west side, only 0.40 m wide. The tiny, vaulted space is lit by exiguous windows in the east and south walls which are splayed towards the interior. In the north-east corner there was originally a square hole in the ceiling, which is now blocked up. In the north-west corner a tunnel leads down to a small cistern, which also has openings outside the tower. The exterior measurements of the tower at the bottom are c.6 m x c.5 m; it is 9–10 m high, having twenty courses of stone, some of which are only partially preserved.

The interpretation of this monument is best attempted along the lines suggested by its modern designation: *beth hyushyo* or *habis*, 'the prison'. The narrow lower entrance with its uneven walls was walled up, imprisoning a recluse inside the cell. Like the recluse behind the church of the Mother of God, he had access to a cistern by way of a tunnel,¹⁷⁷ and, like the recluse in the 'cell of Gabriel', he had a small window¹⁷⁸ communicating with his ministering brothers, who lived in the two cells above. They protected their own seclusion by having no entrance to their dwelling at ground level. The author of the *Life of Jacob of Salab* had such a tower in mind when he described a fictional hermitage in the Egyptian desert. It also had a door half-way up it, so that the hermits could choose whether or not to let down a ladder for visitors. It was 30 cubits high and 20 cubits broad, that is, c.12 m high and c.8 m across, so that even in size it was comparable to that at Qarnim.¹⁷⁹

In the monastery of Mor Lazarus at Habesenus there is a round tower (figs. 37 and 38) with an inscription dating it to 791/2.¹⁸⁰ The interpolator of the *Life of Simeon of Olives*, who falsely attributed this tower to Simeon (d. 734), the founder of the monastery, says that the monks, 'each in his own time', ascended the pillar.¹⁸¹ This 'pillar' (so-called in the inscription) was clearly intended as an imitation of that of Simeon the Stylite, but whereas the pillars of the earliest stylites were solid, this one is hollow.¹⁸² One can clamber to the top on the rough inner stumps of the outwardly shaped stones of which it is constructed. Such pillar-towers facilitated the transference of the concept of a stylite to a recluse living in a tower, even a square tower. Indeed, the Syriac word *esjuno*/*esjunoro*, 'stylite' is used for both. This may explain how it is that Matthew the Recluse (xxii. 15), who was a contemporary of John Chrysostom and therefore antedated the first true stylite, nevertheless came to be included in a list of stylites in the *Book of Life*.¹⁸³

The 'pillar' at Habesenus is an eloquent witness to the inclusion of the recluse within a monastery (cf. *INSCR.* A.13). The *Life of Simeon of Olives* seems to say that the monks took it in turns to act the stylite, but perhaps what is meant is that the community assured the succession, so that there was always a stylite in residence. Near the

¹⁷⁷ cf. Ch. 2, p. 65. ¹⁷⁸ See p. 100 and xxxvii. 13–17.

¹⁷⁹ *L. Jacob*, fol. 173b.2; summary, pp. 4–5. ¹⁸⁰ *INSCR.* A.9.

¹⁸¹ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 238 [Dolabani, p. 151]; summary, p. 178.

¹⁸² It has a basin in the bottom with channels running from it to east and west, perhaps a sanitary arrangement; a door on the west side gives access to the interior of the tower. ¹⁸³ See n. 30 above.

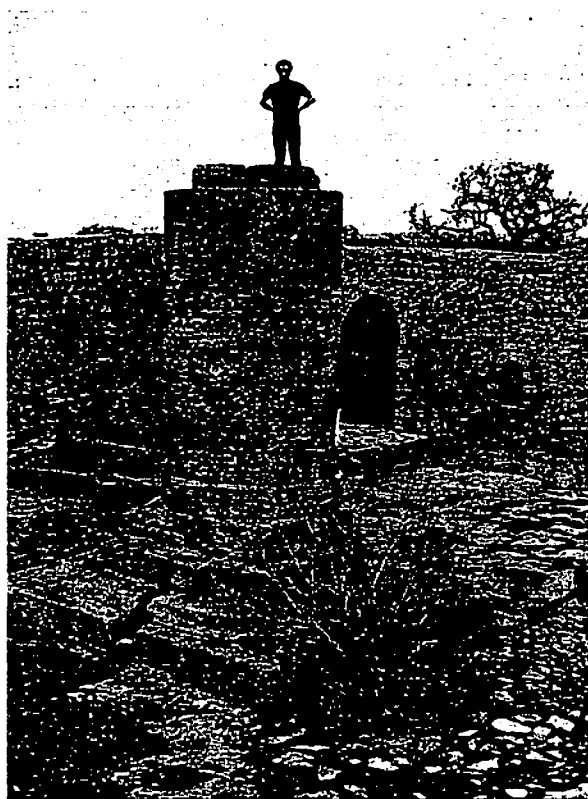


Fig. 37. The Hermit's Pillar in the court of the monastery of Mor Lazarus near Habsenus, with the author on it (Photo: Stephen Palmer)

birthplace of John of Ephesus was a monastery with a high stone column 'to which men used to come in order to stand upon it'. The bishop's earliest memories were of the black silhouette of the stylite, which could be seen above the walls of the monastery from afar, and of his great, claw-like toenails (the clippings of which were treasured by the village women as fertility charms); for John spent his early childhood at this monastery. He learned that Maron, the stylite, had ascended the column against his will, under pressure from the villagers, lest the place of his dead brother Abraham be left vacant.¹⁸⁴ Two to three centuries later this had become an institution: a column had its own monastic community, whose duty it was to serve the stylite and his visitors and to provide a successor for him when he died, needs which, in John's time, had been fulfilled

¹⁸⁴ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [56], [59–60], [69–70], [82].

Measurements:

total height	7 m.
height of pillar	5.5 m.
circumference	7.6 m.
inner diameter	0.80 m.
door	1 m. × 0.53 m.
base	4.8 m. × 4 m.

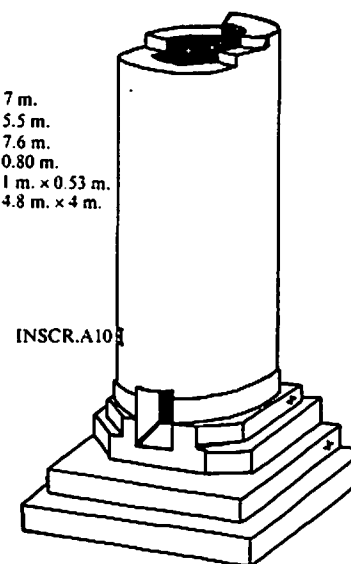


Fig. 38. Sketch of the Habsenus Pillar with some measurements

by kin and villagers.¹⁸⁵ Such a monastery made physical the relationship which existed in the minds of monks in this region, even where there were no columns, between coenobium and 'mourner'. The former looked up to the latter as the pattern of its founding fathers and its own ultimate ideal. This is why no monastery was without its recluses; it also explains the spread of ascetical practices proper to the Naziriteship through the rest of the coenobitic community and the use of the term 'mournership' in a general, as well as a particular sense.¹⁸⁶

c. The relation of village to monastery

Seen from a satellite in orbit around the earth, Tur 'Abdin resembles the coat of a tiger (fig. 39). The bare limestone of the ridges, against which the hill-top villages are effectively camouflaged, alternates with the red-brown stripes of the fertile wadis, snaking their way down towards the central stream which, having carved a deep canyon in the east, flows into the Tigris under the citadel of Fenek; other streams, deflected by the watershed, nose west to the Tigris below Sawro and south to the Hirmas (Jaghjagh)

¹⁸⁵ The priest who 'stood in front of' Maron was his kinsman and was clearly being primed as his successor; by contrast, Simeon built a column outside the east gate of Nisibis with a ready-made supporting monastery ('of Mor Elisha') in the late seventh century (*L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 213–14, 227 [Dolabani, pp. 133, 141]; summary, pp. 176, 177).

¹⁸⁶ See notes 71, 92, 93 above; cf. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, unpublished dissertation, Birmingham, 1982, p. 57.



Fig. 39. Satellite photograph of Tur Abdin (cf. fig. 1) (Landsat Mss band 7 from 8 June 1975; by courtesy of Nigel Pross Associates)

at Nisibis and so, by the Khabur, to the Euphrates. Thick forests of oak in the south, producing edible acorns, are interspersed with village clearings, above which the peaks of the steep and craggy escarpment form a clear barrier to south and east. The plateau is effectively walled and moated on every side. No settlement is large enough to be seen from space without a very fine lens.

The region is very short of water and the trade-routes pass it by. Life there is harsh and contentious; yet the farmers do not complain about the soil and emigrants pine for the healthy air. Even on the bare projections of the mountain's limestone skeleton, fortress-like with the stepped structures of horizontal strata, several varieties of tasty berries appear on the most unpromising thorns. There is room for semi-nomadic tribes on the fringes of the wadis and the hillsides are hospitable to the vine. The desert is everywhere neighbour to the sown.

In many respects Tur Abdin invites comparison with the limestone 'massif of Belus' studied by Tchalenko;¹⁸⁷ it is hard to find anything in Peter Brown's famous study, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', which is not applicable in the fullness of its interpretative strength to the holy men whose dwellings ring the villages of our mountain.¹⁸⁸ The obstacles to trade with the cities on the plain¹⁸⁹ and the scarce opportunities for the cultivation of the olive¹⁹⁰ made Tur Abdin less wealthy and less cosmopolitan, but the need for the objective arbitrator, the defender of the poor against their creditors, the focus of hope and fear in a region where natural disaster, hostile attack or excessive taxation could make emigration inevitable, was just as great.¹⁹¹ The same ambivalence qualified the attitude of the villagers to the outsider

¹⁸⁷ Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord* (1953-8).

¹⁸⁸ *Journal of Roman Studies* 16 (1971), pp. 80-101.

¹⁸⁹ In Assyrian times the wine of Mt Isalla was widely prized, but the latest opinion places Isalla to the west of Tur Abdin in spite of the late antique usage of the name (Izala) for the whole of Mt Masius (Ammianus Marcellinus, John of Ephesus, Theophylact Simocatta) and its later restriction to the southern escarpment of Tur Abdin (Thomas of Marga, the *Avgen Cycle*, etc.); see Kessler, *Unterachungen*, p. 26 contra Streck, *ETIV* (1934), p. 943. Metalwork was a speciality in our plateau in the ninth century BC and the early vitality of Khabur/Hab may have been due to trade across the Tigris. The fine abundance of eighth-century buildings in Tur Abdin suggests that there was at least one gang of expert stone-masons in residence there, whose heirs may have emigrated during the ninth-century decline: the use of Tur Abdinian masons and builders is recorded twice in the *Life of Simeon of Olives*, once at the castle of Tur Abdin in 683/4 (400 men) and once in the church of St Theodore at Nisibis (300 men): *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 208, 221 (Dolabani, pp. 136, 159); summary, pp. 176, 184. The fact that the latter was a Syrian Orthodox church in a mainly Nestorian city may account for the importation of labour; but good stone-masons were in wide demand and the lack of building stone in the immediate vicinity of Nisibis meant that, in the fifteenth century at least, masons did not live in the city (*L. John bar Shayyallah*, fol. 83a: the patriarch imported masons from Mardin because there were none in that region [of Nisibis]). But the history of Amida, Mardin, Dara and Nisibis does not contain any other mention of economic contacts with the plateau, which, then as now, was probably self-sufficient. The lack of a city to which this piece of land could administratively be attached led to the creation of a bishop of Tur Abdin and, later, a governor of the region on a par with the governors of the surrounding cities. Later still, beginning in the fourteenth and continuing, with several intervals of reconciliation, into the early nineteenth century, Tur Abdin formed a separate patriarchate. One of the obstacles to trade with the outside world was the difficulty of the terrain for ancient wheeled transport: Kessler, *Unterachungen*, p. 67; Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.1 ('*anamaxetos te kai aphippoi holdes*'). Nevertheless, Cuneet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, II (1891), p. 516, writes of 'la fabrication de vins et d'eau-de-vie estimés' and 'une exportation importante de raisins secs' from the Kaza of Midyat.

¹⁹⁰ Simeon had to descend to the plain of Serwan in order to find a suitably irrigated site for his 12,000-strong olive plantation. There are occasional olives in Tur Abdin today, especially at Hab, but their cultivation was probably never organized on a commercial basis.

¹⁹¹ See pp. 196, 185.

who became the pivot of their society.¹⁹² Here, too, the local people compensated for the burden placed on them by the military by relating stories about Syrian holy men who had demonstrated the superiority of their spiritual power, even in wartime; and such was the climate of the age that the soldiers themselves and their superiors were impressed.¹⁹³

Monks in Mesopotamia bared their arms to destroy pagan temples and to build their own, but the absence of a 'work ethic' is in striking contrast to other monastic traditions, such as that of Egypt. Not a single monastic Rule has survived from the West-Syrian area which exhorts the community to labour for its living.¹⁹⁴ An important strain in the early ascetical philosophy of the area was the opposition between the life of the cultivator and that of the monk.¹⁹⁵ Even when the inevitable tithes and vows so enriched a certain hierarchy was preserved: hired labourers tended Simeon's olive plantations, but the delicate (and commercially unviable?) task of hand-picking the olives was entrusted to monks, who also transported them to the abbey of Qartmin and pressed them there.¹⁹⁶

Having been received as welcome parasites,¹⁹⁷ the monks became employers, landowners, even the lords of many slaves and maid-servants. The process is telescoped into two generations by the *Life of Jacob of Salab*, which also points up the contrast with the original ideal of dissociation from the world.¹⁹⁸ But dissociation did not mean isolation; it meant definition of an individual in opposition to the community, a momentous act in a village governed by the principle that the individual has no right to separate existence. The dissociation of the Syrian holy man involved the creation of a distance (500 m to 3 km in the average village of Tur 'Abdin) from which he could relate

to the community in a totally different way.¹⁹⁹ Like a lens, this distance focussed the cares of the village on a point defined by a single man or a community of single men; the people of Salab visited Jacob the Recluse with all their problems and disputes. His last act was to turn towards the nearby village with a blessing: 'May the Lord encircle you with a high and mighty wall against all enemies, visible and invisible!'²⁰⁰

The Syriac word for a single man is *ihidhoyo*.²⁰¹ Christ was also *ihidhoyo*, 'unique', so the term invited a theology of identification and 'marriage' with God's only Son. This 'marriage' made physical marriage taboo. The *ihidhoyo* must be separate in this sense, too. But chastity meant more than separation; it meant the domination of the sexual urge, the expulsion of the 'wild invader', as it was so often conceptualized. This imagery must have seemed to pervade the universe; 'enemies, visible and invisible' included Persians (a few miles away on the plain), wolves (occasionally man-eating in Tur 'Abdin²⁰²), weeds and foxes, invading the agency of individuals, and the natural scourges and diseases, sent (presumably for some reason) by the Lord of Heaven and Earth.²⁰³ Against all these invaders the holy man or his relics were a 'wall of defence'.²⁰⁴ This he could clearly not achieve unless the defences of his own soul and of the communal life of his disciples were seen to be impregnable. The 'single men' built metaphorical walls around their souls²⁰⁵ and material walls around their common dwellings. Chastity was here the decisive criterion: in the *Life of Samuel* (xvi. 1-2) it is perhaps called a 'firm foundation'. In this context it is natural that Samuel's community at Qartmin should have been called the 'House of the Men of the Wall' (xxvii. 8).²⁰⁶ One of the things which endeared the monks to the Arabs in later days was the fact that they were always to be found, with their hospitality in food, drink and shelter, on the dry and barren roads of desert and mountain.²⁰⁷ The inhabitants of the Tower of

¹⁹² *L. Daniel*, fol. 100b.2-101a.3 describes how the holy man was framed in a murder (summary, pp. 61-2); *L. Jacob*, fol. 179b.2-180a.2 (summary, pp. 10-11) describes how Jacob's disciple was accused of getting a girl from the nearby village pregnant (parallels with xvi. 12-14 and section 5 of the *Life of Simeon*, xxxv. 11).

¹⁹³ See pp. 53-55.

¹⁹⁴ Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonesammlung*, i (1970), pp. 307-404. On monks as ready builders, see *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. 1106-8, [320].

¹⁹⁵ Thus Barsanubio celebrated the Eucharist in the vineyards of laymen to make them bear good fruit, but cursed vines planted by mounters; saying that their minds should not be occupied with plants: *L. Barsanubio*, fol. 78a.2-b.1; summary, p. 386. But *L. Theodoros*, fol. 67a.1 (cf. n. 112 above), speaks of the recruitment of brothers to bring the land around a new monastery under cultivation, and some correctives to Barsanubio's extreme attitude are cited from Philoxenos and others by Pētra, *Les Reclus syriens*, pp. 129-34.

¹⁹⁶ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 211 (Dolbani, p. 131); the *Berlin Papyrophase*, fol. 85b-86a takes its cue from the *Life of Simeon*, which mentions a dependent monastery of Qartmin in Mt. Singara, and describes how 'monks lived there by the ploughs', but merely supervised the slaves, whose labour could be supplemented at harvest-time by hired men.

¹⁹⁷ cf. x.7-8; *L. Aho*, fol. 180c. cf. Vööbus, *Aho* pp. 23-4.

¹⁹⁸ Thus Jacob himself refused all presents (*L. Jacob*, fol. 179a.2), but his successor Daniel, 'when he saw that the vows and tithes were mounting up, began to improve the monastic buildings [...] he acquired [...] slaves and maid-servants, horses, donkeys, sheep and cows. Before his death he placed there one hundred monks, the recipients of a "requisition" (*libdoly shiglo*); i.e. perhaps a regular contribution from the non-monastic community). He planted there many vineyards and this monastery became very great [...] and acquired many villages' (*L. Jacob*, fol. 181a.1-2; summary, p. 12). The general message of the interpolation in the *Berlin Papyrophase* (n. 196) is that Qartmin was equally wealthy, which we may believe, particularly in the seventh and eighth centuries, but no faith can be placed in the report there that the emperor Anastasius, in addition to building a church at Qartmin (see Ch. 4), gave it seven villages, all of the names of which begin with 'K', although the author claims to have found them 'written in another book which is in the monastery'. If such a record had existed it would have been included in the original *Qartmin Trilogy*.

¹⁹⁹ For another cause, which may have added to the monasteries on the perimeter of the villages in Islamic times, see pp. 191-2.

²⁰⁰ *L. Jacob*, fol. 180b.3; cf. fol. 179a.2-3. 'That region [...] and especially the village near which he lived was blessed by his holy steps. Those who were ill or had had a misfortune or a sorrow ran to the blessed man and took refuge in him.'

²⁰¹ The literature on early Syriac ascetical life and terminology is too vast for a footnote and Vööbus' *Asceticism* is too erratic to be used for reference and too cryptic to act as a guide (many footnotes refer opaquely to MSS without referring to an existing edition or summary); perhaps the most useful in general are S.P. Brock, 'Early Syrian Asceticism', *Numeri* 20 (1973), pp. 1-19; L. Leloir, 'La Pensée monastique d'Ephrem et de Maritimus', *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 197 (1974), pp. 105-34; R. Murray, 'The Features of the Earliest Christian Asceticism', in *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of E.G. Rupp* (1975), pp. 65-77. On 'ihidhoyo' itself (and on *avlio*), see especially E. Beck, 'Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie des ältesten syrischen Mönchtums', *Studia Aneclutana* 38 (1969), pp. 354-67.

²⁰² Chr. Zaigun 775, pp. 368-9 (Chabot, p. 186), has a terrifying (or else hilarious) description of the man-eating monsters that appeared in Tur 'Abdin in the early 770s, but they are probably mere wolves, distorted by the delirium of the plague (*ibid.*, p. 358 [Chabot, p. 178]).

²⁰³ The arbitrariness of God is expressed in section 7 of the *Life of Samuel* (xii. 3f.) by a comparison with a Persian *mar-zaban* (also correctly called a king; cf. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* 1944), p. 102), who could only be deterred from personally executing an innocent child by the prayers of a martyr and a holy man.

²⁰⁴ cf. *L. Theodoros*, fol. 66b.1: 'Stay with us, Father, that only your body may be for us like an unbreachable wall (*shuro mhamo*).'

²⁰⁵ *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [371]: 'I made a decree for my soul that, whenever I saw this frontier, it should not allow wrath to enter from without.' See pp. 44f.

²⁰⁷ Vööbus, *Einiges über die karitative Tätigkeit* (1947), p. 9; cf. *L. Jacob*, fol. 179a.1: 'The big building [of the pagans] he converted into a hostel for those who came to see him and for all passers-by (summary, p. 10).

the Recluses in the *Life of Jacob of Ṣalah* made provision not only for the passing caravans, but even for the wildlife of the place.²⁰⁸ Tradition asserts that one of the prime duties of the community of Mor Awgin was to supply water to travellers on the great trade-route which passed below that monastery.²⁰⁹ These facts allow us to speculate that the site eventually chosen by Samuel's 'Men of the Wall' for their monastery was determined by the course of the east-west mule-track by which travellers invariably crossed Ṭur 'Abdin before the construction of the modern road.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ *L. Jacob*, fol. 174a.1; summary, p. 5. ²⁰⁹ *Leg. Awgin*, pp. 390f.

²¹⁰ Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), pp. 241, 243; Preusser, *Baudenkmäler* (1911), p. 30; that monasteries might be sited by the wayside on purpose to serve the traveller is shown by Canon xi of the Katholikos Isho'jahb I (585), albeit intended for Nestorian monks (*Can. E-Syr.*, p. 147).

4

Anastasius and Qartmin: The last monuments to imperial favour

1. Philoxenos of Mabbugh and John Sa'oro

The foregoing investigation of Upper-Tigritane monasticism was prompted by an examination of the catalogue of holy men in the *Life of Samuel* and it was the cumulative nature of that catalogue which suggested a thematic treatment ranging from the end of the fourth to the early twelfth century. The departure from the chronological framework of this book is justified by the fact that the meagre local evidence is not self-explanatory; it can only be understood in the context of fuller descriptions from sources near Ṭur 'Abdin which are widely separated in time, though in some respects they must be complemented from one another. In any case, it seemed right to treat the tradition as an organic continuum. The excursus gave some opportunity for speculation as to the interior aspects of social phenomena which, in the region we are studying, can only be described in their exterior – often inanimate – manifestations. It also served to bridge a gap in the history of Ṭur 'Abdin between the early and the late fifth century, just as, in the *Life of Samuel*, the catalogue of holy men makes a convenient transition between the foundation legend and the building activities of a fully grown community.

Let us, then, like the author of that *Life*, 'return to our story' (xxvi.19), taking our cue from the same catalogue, where it names Abel 'who caused his column to bend down while he was on it and embraced Mor Akhsnoyo, when the latter came to obtain his blessing' (xxii.3–4). This 'Mor Akhsnoyo' is none other than the great confessor, Philoxenos (d. 523). Abel, 'the first stylite who appeared in the monastery of Qartmin',¹ was in all likelihood an early imitator of Simeon (d. 459) and therefore an elder contemporary of the bishop of Mabbugh. At some date in the early period of Arab domination, the head of Philoxenos was brought from his distant burial place to Midyat and placed in a church built under his invocation quite near the monastery which was said to mark the place where Abel's pillar had stood.² In 1145, this church

¹ *Book of Life*, p. 6.

² *L. Philoxenos*, fol. 119a–b: 'After a long time Mabbugh was destroyed by the disturbances of the kings of the Greeks and the Arabs when they gained dominion over the sea coast. The members of Mor Philoxenos' family took the head of the saint and arrived and entered Ṭur 'Abdin [here spelt with OLAF; cf. Ch. 1, n. 46] and built a church in a village called Modhyadh [Midyat]. There they built a great church and placed in it the

was desecrated by infidels and the relic was cast out on the street. Thereafter, for greater security, it was kept in Abel's monastery (now called 'Mor Abraham and Mor Abel').³ A verse panegyric penned at Qartmin after this catastrophe gives a full account of the meeting of Abel and Philoxenos.⁴ The local tradition on which this poem is based states that Akhshoyo was born at Tabel in Beth Garmai, spent a part of his youth in Tur 'Abdin, and underwent some schooling at Qartmin before going to the West and visiting the monastery of Tell 'Eda.⁵ The only other authority who mentions Tabel as his birthplace is Simeon of Beth Arslam; he does so in the context of Akhshoyo's residence at the School of Edessa.⁶ But since the local tradition knows nothing of the latter we must suppose it is independent of Simeon. On the other hand, a sojourn in Tur 'Abdin fits geographically with the transition from Tabel to Edessa described by Simeon, and a mid-fifth-century persecution explains the flight of Akhshoyo's family to a mountainous refuge within the Roman empire.⁷

There is, then, much to be said for this account of the great man's youth, of which otherwise nothing is known. It is corroborated by a letter of Philoxenos himself, quoted by the author of the Qartmin biography. After making or quoting a catalogue of all his works, which includes 'twenty-two books of letters', he says:

In one of his letters – that addressed to John Sa'oro, metropolitan of Amidā – he says this: 'I am your friend who has loved you ever since we were brought up together in the abbey of Qartmin. . . . My first teachers were of that same angelic abbey, where I was given a spiritual upbringing, although I did not persevere in their training until it was complete.'⁸

This is probably a gentle way of saying that he left Qartmin to find higher learning which could not be provided there; the author of this biography offers the same explanation for his migration to the West. The partial nature of his debt to Qartmin

relic of Mor Akhshoyo. It is still called "the church of Mor Philoxenos" today.' cf. Bell/Mango, 74, pp. viii, ix, 18, 19–20, 51–2, 131; fig. 11, 36; pls. 169–75; Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur 'Abdin* (1984), pp. 62, 241; 'Stadtdiagnose von Midyat (the church of P. is that nearest to the monastery of Abel on the eastern edge of the town). Anschütz's date for the first church (538) rests on no ancient source and is contradicted by L. Philoxenos.

³ L. Philoxenos, fol. 121a: after the raid the 'chief presbyter' took the relic and 'hid it in the Temple of Mor Abraham'; cf. fol. 120a–b. After a little time the body of Mor Abraham, master of Mor Barsawmo the chief of the monasteries, came to the same monastery of Mor Abel and a splendid and great temple was built for him to the south of the small temple of Mor Abel; and what had formerly been the temple of Mor Abel became the House of Saints and the Baptistery and that of Mor Abraham became the temple. Until this day it is called the monastery of Mor Abraham, an offshoot [of] the abbey of Qartmin. cf. Bell/Mango, 74, pp. 8, 10, 35–8, 51, 131; fig. 23; pls. 176–83; Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur 'Abdin* (1984), pp. 63–4; the legend of Abraham, edited by Nau in *PO 5* (1910) and summarized by him from a longer text in *ROC* 19 (1914), pp. 414f. is an embroidered version of his short apparition in L. Barsawmo, fol. 72a.3–b.1; summary, p. 273.

⁴ L. Philoxenos, fol. 112–14 (with details about his residence near Beth Svirina and his encounter with monks from Cordene who took him to Qartmin); cf. A. Mingana, *The Expositor* 20 (1920), pp. 151–3. *Leti. Sin. B. Arslam on Nestorius*, p. 353; the pronunciation of Tabel is given by L. Philoxenos, *Eli de Qartmin*, line 33 shows it as disyllabic, *pace* Sachau, *Zur Ausbreitung des Christentums in Asien* (1919), p. 57. *Eli de Qartmin*, lines 39–40, gives persecution as the reason, but this is probably a guess, since L. Philoxenos, fol. 112a says only 'it happened one day that his parents came with all his relations, leaving their own land, to live as emigrants in Tur 'Abdin'; cf. Mingana, *The Expositor* 20 (1920), p. 151.

⁵ L. Philoxenos, fol. 116a–b; cf. Mingana, *The Expositor* 20 (1920), p. 154. Twenty-two books of letters: L. Philoxenos, fol. 115b; cf. Mingana, *The Expositor* 20 (1920), p. 153.

would hardly have been invented by a forger from that abbey. It is suppressed altogether in the verse panegyric by Eli, who makes him a monk of Qartmin.⁹ Barsawm, who knew another, shorter *Life* of Philoxenos, states that it was only when he went to Tell 'Eda that he actually became a monk.¹⁰ If he had been a monk of Qartmin he would certainly have merited an entry of his own in the catalogue of holy men, not just a passing mention under Abel's name. The chronicler of 846, although he was probably not a monk of Qartmin, shows considerable interest in the abbey and in the person of Philoxenos, but does not connect the two.¹¹ Neither of these sources qualifies as exhaustive historiography, nor is their silence necessarily significant.¹² Yet the omission may be allowed to outweigh the lone and suspect testimony of a late panegyrist. That Philoxenos' contacts with Qartmin were not confined to a single adolescent sojourn may be inferred from another lost letter, quoted in the *Life of Samuel*:

We have found [a passage] concerning this holy abbey in the letter which was sent by the blessed Philoxenos to Eustochios.¹³ 'To go there seven times in faith is like going to Jerusalem, for it is built in the likeness and after the pattern of [that city], and it is laid out according to the same design.'

(XVIII.8–11)

I shall argue later in this chapter that this refers to the symbolic setting and decoration of the sanctuary in the Anastasian church at Qartmin, a building which was completed in 512. This passage would therefore suggest that Philoxenos had been in Qartmin after that date. He might know of it only by hearsay, but if so, why does he stress the merit of going there in person?

No letter from Philoxenos to the monks of Qartmin has survived and none was quoted by the Qartminite authors here referred to. Yet Qartmin stood for the causes that the zealous bishop defended. It is situated between Arzan and Beth Gawgal, at no great distance from Amidā, and the monks of all these places received encyclicals from him.¹⁴ Might not the letters to the monasteries of Beth Gawgal actually have included Qartmin among their addressees? Sozomen's 'Gaugalion' was a mountain in the province of Amidā 'around' which the monasteries led by Daniel and Simeon were situated.¹⁵ In the early fifth century these can scarcely be other than Daniel of Aghlosh and Simeon of Qartmin.¹⁶ This suggests a greater geographical extension of the ancient

⁹ *Eli de Qartmin*, lines 235–48 (in lines 249–54, Eli makes the second half of P.'s letter into John's reply); the question whether he became a monk at Qartmin is left in some ambiguity by L. Philoxenos, fol. 113b (cf. Mingana, *The Expositor* 20 (1920), p. 152), but it is probable that the author meant to suggest it.

¹⁰ Barsawm, *KDB*, pp. 297f.

¹¹ The biography of Philoxenos at *Chr. 'Harran' 846*, pp. 221–2, is one of the most important sources for his life: Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbug* (1963), p. 24.

¹² *Pace* Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbug* (1963), p. 24f. si Philoxène avait effectivement été moine à Qartmin, comment toute la tradition historiographique de ce couvent à la fin du VIII^e siècle [viz. *Chr. 'Harran' 846*, which de Halleux takes to have been written at Qartmin, and the *Qartmin Trilogy*, which Baunastark dates to c. 797 (*Geschichte*, p. 274)] n'auraient-ils fait aucune mention d'une circonstance aussi glorieuse pour eux?

¹³ See the apparatus and the note *ad loc.*: Eustorgius is the only name which could make sense of the 'R', but Greek GAMA is always transcribed in Syriac as GOMAL. The scribe of the Istanbul MS was either a very learned man or else knew another witness to this letter. Eustochios was the name of a deacon in Alexandria who died in the 520s or the 530s, as we learn from *Leti. Severus* V, No. 54 (AD 519–38), p. 181.

¹⁴ Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbug* (1963), pp. 196, 197, 198, 201, 220.

¹⁵ Sozomen III.14.30 (p. 123 lines 5–8). ¹⁶ See p. 74.

name than that of its modern equivalent Bagokke:¹⁷ and while Sozomen is probably stretching his phrase overmuch by including Aghlosh, there is nothing implausible about the inclusion of Qartmin, which lies near the top of a ridge directly connected with Bagokke. 'The great monastery of Beth Gawgal' was conjectured by Baršawm to have been a precursor of the Nestorian foundation of Mār Abraham of Kashkar, whom he therefore envisages as taking over a previous Syrian Orthodox foundation and 'refounding' it in 571.¹⁸ In the late seventh century we find the abbot of this Nestorian community, Rabban Gabriel 'the Cow', locked in doctrinal controversy with the 'Severians' of Qartmin.¹⁹ It was this kind of propaganda that Philoxenos had countered with his encyclicals to the monasteries of Beth Gawgal, for that ridge formed the frontier between Persia and Rome, a frontier which determined the denominational colouring of the area on either side of it.²⁰

It has been suggested that Philoxenos, who was in high favour with Anastasius when that emperor decided to have a church built at Qartmin, was the instigator of this benefaction.²¹ That is possible; no more. Any further attempts to link supposedly 'iconoclastic' aspects of the decoration of the church with supposedly 'iconoclastic' utterances of Philoxenos, or to interpret the benefaction as a 'bribe' designed to win support for the election of Severus as patriarch of Antioch must be abandoned, because they are based on false premisses.²² Only a tenuous link is made between Philoxenos and the Anastasian church by my inference from his letter to Eustochius.

Another – perhaps a better qualified – candidate for the role of intermediate between the abbey and the emperor is John Sa'oro, to whom Philoxenos wrote on the occasion of his episcopal election.²³ The date of this event is fixed by the Qartminite *Chronicle* of 819:

In the year 795 of the Greeks [AD 483/4] John Sa'oro of Qartmin Abbey was made bishop of Amida, where he built a large and splendid church dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and a bridge over the river Tigris outside the city.

Neither of these monuments survives, although an unpublished inscription suggests that the foundations of the bridge were incorporated in subsequent reconstructions up to the time when the present bridge was built.²⁴ The church of the Forty Martyrs served as a sanctuary for survivors of the Persian siege in 503.²⁵

¹⁷ On which see Ch. 3, n. 7.

¹⁸ Baršawm, *KBB*, p. 642; with Baršawm's alternative spelling compare the endnote of a MS at Azakh dated 1876: 'the monastery of Mor Abraham Kashkroyo in the mountain of Beth Gawgi'.

¹⁹ See Ch. 3, n. 127.

²⁰ See de Halleux, Introduction to *Lett. Philox. G.II*; Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. iv.

²¹ Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 294. ²² S.P. Brock in Bryer/Herrin, *Iconoclasm* (1977), p. 54.

²³ *L. Philoxenos*, fol. 116a-b: 'such a priest as this was needed by the church ... because you are from the abbey of my spiritual fathers and were called and chosen from it [to the episcopacy]'.

²⁴ The inscription, on a basalt block which is now covered by the Tigris except at the end of the summer, was photographed by an acquaintance of Prof. Dr R. Degen (Munich), who showed me the photograph: it seems to have begun 'In the year eight [hundred] ...', which would place it in the sixth century. In 742/3 floodwaters brought down forests of walnut-trees in Ingilene (cf. *LL. Eastern Saints*, p. [558]!) which formed a jam for six or seven miles upstream from the bridge and eventually caused it to collapse (*Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 176 [Chabot, p. 29]). The history of its restorations up to the presently surviving structure of 1065 is told by Max von Berchem in Berchem/Strzygowski, *Amida* (1910), pp. 31f.

²⁵ *Chr. Amida* 569, viii.5, pp. 78–9; cf. *Chr. Michael* 1195, ix.7b, p. 259.

The chronicler who records this fact, as an Amidene citizen of the mid-sixth century,²⁶ was in a position to write with authority about this bishop:

Bishop John, a man of chastity and nobility and of dignified behaviour, had died a few days before [the siege]. [This statement is corroborated by a contemporary of the siege, who calls him 'the excellent John';²⁷ his death must therefore be placed late in 502.] This man was summoned from the monastery of Qartmin when he was elected bishop. He did not alter his fasting or his asceticism or his practices, but continued to say his offices by day and by night. He warned and admonished the rich people of the city, at a time of famine and pestilence, when the Arabs were invading [the area] saying that they should not withhold the food-supply in time of need, but should sell it or even give it to the poor, lest by withholding it they should store it up for the enemy, as Scripture warns [Lev. 26:16], which is in fact what came to pass. This man had a vision, in which an angel appeared to him, standing beside the altar in the sanctuary, and gave him warning in advance that the enemy was about to come and that he, as he was a righteous man, would be gathered up before the enemy [arrived]. This prophecy he himself made public in an announcement to the people of the city, that they might repent and be saved from Wrath.²⁸

He adds that John gave his blessing to Nonnus of Seleucia and foretold that he would become bishop of Amida after him. The prophecy came true, though not immediately.²⁹

John Sa'oro, whose sobriquet probably means 'the healer', should be identified with 'Mor John', whose commemoration was made on 21 August at Qartmin and in ʿTur ʿAbdin.³⁰ The dedication of the church which he built in Amida is probably connected with the existence, since 409, of a church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in his abbey.³¹ His building activities in Amida were probably financed out of the imperial coffers. Indeed, such was the public and strategic importance of a bridge over the Tigris that John might be presumed to have acted for the emperor in building one.³² There was nothing unusual about this. Bishops throughout the empire were involved in building projects initiated and financed by the Christian emperors. In Edessa, Bishop Rabbula had converted a Jewish synagogue into a church of St Stephen at the command of Theodosius II.³³ Thomas, bishop of Amida, the immediate successor of our John, was charged by Anastasius with supervising the building of Dara.³⁴

²⁶ There is an excellent introduction in F.J. Hamilton and E.W. Brooks, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene* (London, 1899).

²⁷ *Chr. Edessa* 506, p. 304 (Ch. 83); it is interesting that the author's pro-Flavian (and anti-Philoxenian) stance (H. Gelzer, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1 (1892), pp. 34–49) does not affect his good opinion of John.

²⁸ *Chr. Amida* 569, vii.3, p. 24; cf. *Chr. Michael* 1195, ix.7b, p. 258.

²⁹ *Chr. Amida* 569, vii.4, p. 28; cf. *Chr. Michael* 1195, ix.13c, pp. 267–8.

³⁰ *Cal. TA*, 21 Aug.: if this is the date of his episcopal consecration, the year given in *Chr. Qartmin* 819 (AG 795) may be incorrect, since 21 Aug. 484 was not a Sunday, though 21 Aug. 483 was; *Chr. Qartmin* 819, pp. 4, 6, has a point over the SEMKATH, implying the vocalization *sa'oro* (*sa'arā*), not *s'oro*, as understood by Chabot in the translation (see also his translation of the passages of *Chr. Michael* 1195 cited in notes 25, 28 and 29 above; cf. Honigmann, *Evêques*, p. 234 n.1; de Halleux, in *Eli de Qartamin*, ii, p. 9), nor *sa'ra* (Nau), *se'ara*! (Krüger), *s'ra*! (Honigmann) etc. This vocalization is given in the MS of *L. Philoxenos* and in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 45 and Dolabani, *History of Qartmin* (1959), p. 80. That it was an unfamiliar word is shown by the Syrians' care in pointing it and by the adoption of the more familiar *so'uro* (cf. Ch. 3, n. 117) by MSS P and B of the *Qartmin Trilogy*. This equation cannot be right, because *so'uro* had an ecclesiastical sense incompatible with John's office. 'Heal' is one of the senses of *s'ar*; we have seen that John was counted a saint.

³¹ XXXII.1.

³² *Chr. Edessa* 540, AG 723.

³³ *Chr. Amida* 569, vii.6, pp. 34f; cf. Capizzi, *L'imperatore Anastasio I* (1969), p. 218.

The personal contact thus established between John Sa'oro and Anastasius gave the bishop an opportunity to promote the interests of his monastery.³⁵ It is a perennial feature of Syriac church history that a bishop would remain loyal to his mother-house and use his position to benefit her. The completion of the Anastasian church at Qartmin is dated to 512 (L.VIII.19f; LXI.11-12); but if it was undertaken towards the end of John's life, the siege and capture of Amidā and the subsequent construction of Dara would have delayed its continuation until after 507 or later, when workmen could first be spared for less pressing business. There is no reason why the church might not have taken five or more years to build; but a further delay might be allowed before its official inauguration, which was perhaps postponed because of Severus' consecration in Antioch in 512.

There are therefore good grounds for the claim that John Sa'oro is most likely to have instigated an imperial benefaction to Qartmin, which might be seen partly as a *quid pro quo* for his useful service in the matter of the Tigris bridge; and there is a sufficient explanation for the fact that the registered date of completion of the church is ten years later than that of John's death. Moreover, the *Qartmin Trilogy*, which informs us about Anastasius' benefaction, brings it into relation with John Sa'oro, even if, in its present form, the passage in question bears the stamp of a hasty revision (LX.3-6). The change consisted in the substitution of the (adapted) entry about John Sa'oro from the *Chronicle of 819* for a lost original main clause answering the introductory dating formula. This quotation is stripped of its own date and introduced instead by the words 'in the same year', thus falsely synchronizing it with the twenty-first year of Anastasius and leaving the first sentence with no main clause. The explanation of this clumsy surgery may be that the original sentence concerned John Sa'oro and so seemed a suitable point at which to graft on the extract from the chronicle; for at one redaction of the *Qartmin Trilogy* a number of extracts from this source were more or less appropriately inserted in the text. I suggest that the original text may have read as follows:

§1. In the twenty-first year of the victorious and merciful Anastasius who put on Christ and was clothed in the garment of the Orthodox Faith of the Christians, in which he drove out and expelled the accursed Macedonius [a Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople, this actually occurred in 511] from the Church and installed in his place the praiseworthy Timothy, <was consecrated the church which the same emperor built at the instigation of John Sa'oro, bishop of Amidā, in Qartmin abbey, from which that bishop had been called>

§2. When, therefore, King Anastasius heard of the fine reputation of the blessed men in this abbey, he sent much gold . . . (L.VIII.19-LIX.8)

The great interest of the passage which follows derives from the detail in which the design and decoration of such an early Christian building is described. Poetic celebrations of splendid buildings are not uncommon in Byzantine literature, the most famous being that of Justinian's Hagia Sophia by Paul the Silentary.³⁶ In Syriac the genre is represented by the remarkable hymn on the sixth-century domed church in Edessa.³⁷

³⁵ cf. *L.L. Eastern Saints*, p. [538].

³⁶ The parallel adduced by A. Grabar, *CA 8* (1956), p. 87, between Paul's description and that of Qartmin is found in Friedländer's edition at lines 871-83 (cf. p. 127).

³⁷ = *Sagitho*.

But there is a great difference between such poetic descriptions, which expound the symbolism of the design while affecting a certain vagueness about physical dimensions and exact appearances, and our prose account, which is devoted to detail and exact measurements but neglects the symbolic intention of the architects and their advisers. The church in Edessa has vanished and architectural historians disagree about its hypothetical reconstruction.³⁸ The church at Qartmin is still there, though many of its original ornaments are gone, but we lack contemporary authority for its symbolic interpretation. Perhaps for this reason no attempt has yet been made to read the symbols. Yet the near-contemporary Edessene hymn fully justifies the assumption that this was the architects' intention. To remedy this imbalance is one of my aims in embarking on a detailed commentary of this passage.

Another reason for doing so is that the case for identifying the church there described with that still standing, though already sufficiently grounded, becomes even stronger in the light of an improved reading of the text and additional observations *in situ*. One of the consequences of this is to reverse the force of Baumstark's liturgical argument against an early date, thus challenging his premiss that the mystic celebration of the Eucharist was not introduced until after the sixth century.³⁹

I believe that the passage, though often discussed, has never been correctly translated; nor has discussion always been based on a reliable text.⁴⁰ Some philological observations are inevitable, but I hope to make them comprehensible to the reader who has no Syriac and to convince him of their importance. I also suggest some emendations which have, briefly, to be justified.

2. Commentary on the Syriac description of the main church at Qartmin

The text can be read in its entirety in section 2 of the *Life of Gabriel*. Here I shall divide it into nine paragraphs for the purpose of commentary, the first being that which was later tampered with in connection with John Sa'oro. I have already discussed that, and so shall move on directly to the second paragraph.

§2. When, therefore, King Anastasius heard of the fine reputation of the blessed men in this abbey, he sent much gold with his servants, and craftsmen such as prepare hewn stone and baked bricks, and [other] skilled craftsmen, and architects, for the construction of the Great Temple, the foundations of which had been laid by the angel and Mor Simeon. The names of the architects were Theodore and Theodosius, and they were

³⁸ See the second Appendix, by Lyn Rodley, in A. Palmer, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988), pp. 117-67.

³⁹ K.A. Baumstark, *OC 15* (1915), pp. 111-31.

⁴⁰ Several authors used the *Berlin Paragraph*, some only in Sachau's summary (*MSS Berlin*, pp. 385-6); even the original text was only available in Nau's hasty copy of the London MS and an extract in Pogon's *Inscriptions*. The following translations of the original text, some partial, have appeared: F. Nau, *Actes d'Yve congre. orient.* (1907), pp. 21-2; Pogon, *Inscriptions*, p. 40; Krüger, *Mönchum I*, pp. 37-9; J. Leroy, *CA 8* (1956), pp. 77-81; Johnson, in Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pp. 291-2. The following studies represent the background to my discussion: Pogon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 40-1; Bell/Mango, *T4*, pp. vi, ix, x, 6, 8-11, 16, 19, 31-5, 137-8 with figs. 5, 19, 21-2 and plates 211, 213-18; Preusser, *Baudenkmäler*, pp. 31-2 with plates 42, 43; S. Guyer, *Reperitorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912), pp. 497-99, 505; A. Baumstark, *OC 14* (1914), pp. 158-64; *id.*, *OC 15* (1915), pp. 111-31; Villard, *Le chiese della Mesopotamia* (1940), pp. 55-6, 59-60; A. Grabar, *CA 8* (1956), pp. 83-91; J. Leroy, *CRALBL* (1968), pp. 480f; Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', with 49 plates; C. Mango in Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 296.

surnamed 'sons of Shufnay'. He sent also goldsmiths and silversmiths and bronzesmiths and ironsmiths, men to make pictures and 'combers' [i.e. smoothers] of marble blocks, *men skilled in putting together mosaics to make the forms of crosses and well-ordered committees of learned advisers*, [all of them] skilled in building in a manner worthy of praising God and of honouring his saints. (LIX.6-15)

The sense of the italicized words is difficult and my translation can only be justified by taking the two problematic phrases individually. A literal rendering of the first might be: 'and-workers-of objects-characterized-by-the-imposition-of-a-seal in-things-put-together-to-make-a-composite-whole'.⁴¹ Pognon, comparing the descriptions of the sanctuary in §6 with the surviving décor of that sanctuary, jumped to the conclusion that the word *hthime*, 'objects-characterized-by-the-imposition-of-a-seal', must mean 'mosaics', because it is applied to the *opus sectile* pavement and to the mosaic-covered vault.⁴² Leroy subsequently attempted to justify this on etymological grounds, but could only do so within the wider extension of the French word 'sceller', which can mean both 'to mark with a seal' and 'to affix with cement'.⁴³ The Syriac verb *HTM* is never found with the latter meaning. Johnson pointed out the correspondence between the recurrent cross-motif in the surviving pavement and the frequent use of *HTM* to mean 'impose the seal of the cross', whether by a gesture or by a mark.⁴⁴ He might have added that the most prominent feature of the mosaic on the vault is the three crosses, the arms of which, while studded with 'jewels' of coloured tesserae, are executed in gold (fig. 40).⁴⁵ Cross-designs are the common feature shared by pavement and vault and I therefore propose this as a translation of *hthime*.

It is true that pavement and vault can both be described as 'mosaics', but only in a wide sense of the term. The Syriac word for mosaics, attested in the hymn on the church at Edessa⁴⁶ as well as in our text, is derived from the Greek *kubos* and connotes the cubic *tesserae*; clearly it could not also be used to describe an *opus sectile* pavement. But the word *mrakkvotho*, meaning 'things-put-together-to-make-a-complete-whole', could well have been chosen as an umbrella-term covering both types of 'mosaic'.

The second phrase is divided from the first by a point, showing that the scribe, at least, was not tempted to take it as a further complement of the construct 'workers-of'; nor, it seems, does Syriac grammar allow such a construct to take such a weighty double complement.⁴⁷ The phrase must therefore be considered as an independent member of a list. Since it is a list of separate groups of experts, the word *mawtve* must not be taken in its literal sense of 'benches' but in its transferred sense, 'advisory committees',⁴⁸ and the genitive *d-idhā'itho* as abstract for concrete: 'of knowledge' meaning 'composed of knowledgeable men'.

It is perhaps somewhat odd that the craftsmen should be supposed to have special-

⁴¹ The translation of the last unit as 'in chariots' rests on a false – though technically admissible – vocalization of the text: *b-markvotho* for *ba-mrakkvotho*.

⁴² Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 40 n. 5; this interpretation was taken over by Brockelmann, *Lex.*, *sub voce htm*, with misleading double reference to the same text.

⁴³ Leroy, *CA* 8 (1956), pp. 78–9; *Le Petit Robert* (Paris, 1972), s.v. *sceller*.

⁴⁴ In Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 292; Payne Smith, *Lex.*, s.v. *htm* (the third sense listed).

⁴⁵ Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pp. 285–6. ⁴⁶ *Sugitho*, verse 5 line 2a.

⁴⁷ T. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* (1898/1977), §205.

⁴⁸ Payne Smith, *Lex.*, s.v. *yib: mawthā*, 2.



Fig. 40. Cross in mosaic on vault of Anastasian sanctuary, Qartmin

ized in cross-designs. The explanation, I think, is that the list of experts was drawn up by inference from the writer's knowledge of the completed building. As will be clear from the rest of the passage and from a description of the surviving building, *hewn stone* was needed for the walls and for the arches spanning the vault, *bricks* for the vault itself and for the smaller vaults in the sanctuary. *Goldsmiths* were needed for the hanging-lamp and for some of the objects hanging from the bronze trees – perhaps also for the gilded *tesserae* of the mosaics; *silversmiths* were needed for the chain on which the lamp was suspended, for the altar-vessel, and for other objects on the trees; *bronzesmiths* for the trees themselves and for many of the objects on them, as well as for the domed ciborium above the altar; *ironsmiths*, presumably, for the clamps which bind the stone blocks to one another (cf. §8). The 'pictures' are probably to be understood as icons, because the most likely purpose of the recesses in the east wall of the nave is to receive icon-panels (see p. 134). The altar was marble, so that masons skilled in working that stone were needed. Marble was also used in revetting the walls of the sanctuary. If my interpretation is correct, the last two categories in the list, mosaicists and advisers, show clearly that the writer was 'working backwards' from the finished product: he saw that the pavement and the vault of the sanctuary were decorated with cross-designs, so he posited a skill especially for making such designs. The advisers were needed for the liturgical and scriptural aspects of the design, which our writer must therefore be aware of, though he does not mention them.

What could not have been deduced from the building itself is the names of the architects, Theodore and Theodosius, the so-called 'sons of Shufnay'. 'Shufnay' is attested in the *Legend of Malke* as a woman's name.⁴⁹ It is unusual, though not unheard-of,⁵⁰ for a matronymic to take the place of a patronymic among the Syrians, and this may be why the writer qualifies it by the words 'and they were surnamed'. Two architects were employed by Justinian to design Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and 'Asaf and Addai', who are named along with Bishop Amidanos as builders of the domed church in Edessa, are usually considered to be a similar yoke-team of architects.⁵¹ It has been suggested that one would be responsible for structural design while the other was entrusted with the décor and furnishings.⁵² Our text is perhaps the earliest attestation of the activities of the 'sons of Shufnay'. John of Ephesus may have related

⁴⁹ Ch. 1, n. 37. ⁵⁰ One signal example is John bar Aphtonia.

⁵¹ *Sugitho*, verse 2 line 2a; H. Goussen, *Mus* 38 (1925), pp. 121–2; K. E. McVey, *DOP* 37 (1983), p. 98. (But see A. Palmer, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988), pp. 127–28 for a different view.)

⁵² H. Goussen, *Mus* 38 (1925), p. 122: 'der eine ... für den Rohbau, der andere für die Innenausstattung'.

that 'Theodosius and Theodore, the sons of Shufnay' were the architects of Dara,⁵³ much later they were credited with the building of the main church at the Saffron Monastery, as well as with half a dozen other churches in Tur'Abdin.⁵⁴ They are said to have been sent from Constantinople and their names are Greek; yet their matronymics Syriac, and architectural historians are agreed in seeing the Anastasian church at Qartmin as a syncretistic design, with important non-Greek elements which may go back to archaic Mesopotamian buildings.⁵⁵ It is not unlikely that the architects belonged to a local Mesopotamian school, but had gone to Constantinople for further training.⁵⁶

Stylistic comparison makes it most improbable that the 'sons of Shufnay' had anything to do with building the splendid main church of the Saffron Monastery. Its ground plan is totally different from that at Qartmin (it is closer to that of the vanished church at Edessa⁵⁷) and it is generously covered with complex decoration in carved stone friezes and niches inside and out (fig. 41), whereas the church at Qartmin has no stone carving, except for a simple archaic cross on the lintel of the west entrance (fig. 13A).⁵⁸ There is no evidence that mosaic was used on the walls or the vaults at the Saffron Monastery (even the mosaic floor of the sanctuary of St Mary in the same monastery is worked in *tesselee*, not in *opus sectile*).⁵⁹ Besides, John of Mardin (d. 1165) tells us explicitly that all his efforts to discover historical records of the Saffron Monastery prior to its refoundation by Ananias in the late eighth century were in vain: it was not even known which saint's name had originally been attached to it.⁶⁰ It follows, of course, that the monastery may lie concealed under another name in early sources.⁶¹ But John's testimony undermines the later tradition about the 'sons of Shufnay', so this detail must be regarded as a 'fig-leaf' borrowed from Qartmin to cover the historical nakedness of her companion near Mardin.

All the same, the church with its neighbouring burial-chamber (perhaps also the church of St Mary) at the Saffron Monastery are likely to date from the sixth century. The stone carving has been dated by stylistic comparison to that time and the pavement

⁵³ *Chr. John Eph. 585*, II, 5, *extract*, fol. 189b; Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory*, II (1932), p. xiv (see Sources, I A. 14); cf. *ibid.* fol. 189a; p. xxiii; John of Asia says in the Fifth Book (*viz.* of the lost second part of his Ecclesiastical Chronicle, reading *harmatho* for *harmatho*, with Budge) about chronography that the cause of its building [*viz.* Dara] was thus: . . . but the narrative contains many legendary elements.

⁵⁴ So the 'document' in Ch. 2, n. 35.

⁵⁵ Cf. Bell/Mango, *T. 4*, p. 8, cf. p. 1x; E. Heinrich, *Kunst des Orients I* (1950), pp. 5-19.

⁵⁶ Cf. Goussien, *Mus 38* (1925), p. 122; [Asaph and Addai] *Architekten* . . . 'vielleicht auch von der dortigen [sic] in Constantinopel "Bauteile" in ihre orientalische Heimat, denn dahin weisen ihre gut orientalischen Namen, herübergekommen, um den vaterländischen Bau auszuführen'.

⁵⁷ M. C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), p. 523.

⁵⁸ Preusser, *Bauentwicklung*, p. 31: 'ohne jeglichen ornamentalen Schmuck' is thus a slight exaggeration.

⁵⁹ Mundell/Mango, in *edd.* Garsoian *et al.*, *Essays of Byzantium* (1982), p. 124.

⁶⁰ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207.

⁶¹ M. C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), pp. 526-8, wants to identify it with the monastery of Yohann Aloho d-Nofo, but there is good reason to believe this name was always attached, as now, to the cave-monastery with the perennial drip of water which looks down from a cliff in the north on the Saffron Monastery: 'd-Nofo' is to be construed as a relative clause, meaning 'which drips'. John of Mardin relates that the monastery of 'Nofo' was inhabited by solitaries when Bishop Ananias decided to restore it shortly after his consecration to the see of Mardin in 792/3 (*Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 207-8 with n. 20; cf. Mundell, *art. cit.*, p. 526 n. 60); but the Saffron Monastery which subsequently bore the name of Ananias was not reoccupied until his restoration (*Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207).



Fig. 41. Sixth-century crosses from the Saffron Monastery near Mardin: A. West facade; B. Southern niche on inner west wall; C. Lintel of House of Saints

of the church of St Mary, though still unpublished, has been judged as old as the friezes.⁶² Even if a certain reserve is justified with regard to these judgements, inasmuch as a conservative area is capable of perpetuating an antique style for several centuries, historical considerations bring us back to the sixth as the most likely century of origin. The monastery lay abandoned for most of the eighth century until its restoration by Ananias.⁶³ But the eighth century was the first period of extensive renovation in Tur'Abdin and the surrounding area after the ravages of the last Roman-Persian wars and the Arab invasions.⁶⁴ Both Anastasius and Justinian were active in promoting building works in Mesopotamia, but if the monastery was in Monophysite hands it is doubtful whether it had an opportunity for material expansion on a quasi-metropolitan scale under the latter emperor.⁶⁵ That it was in Monophysite hands during the persecutions may be inferred from the fact that 'the mountain of Mardin', in particular the cliff-top monastery of 'Nofo' (Our Lady of the Water-Drop), which looks down on the Saffron Monastery, is cited as a place of refuge of Monophysite bishops.⁶⁶ It therefore seems probable that the Saffron Monastery was, like Qartmin, an incidental beneficiary of the events which followed the fall of Amida in 503. Architects, builders and craftsmen of every description were enticed from all the Orient to this region to build a new fortress-city, Dara-Anastasiopolis, in the astounding time of two to three years;⁶⁷ after it was finished, all this skilled manpower was on hand to build churches in nearby monasteries. Individual contacts, such as that between John Sa'oro and the emperor, may have played a role in giving particular direction to these resources; but if imperial funds were used, as is attested at Qartmin and suggested at the Saffron Monastery by the splendour of the stonework and its Greek elements, the motives for the gifts will have been much the same as those of earlier emperors, whose benefactions were discussed in Chapter 2.⁶⁸

§3. Then, in the night following the arrival of the craftsmen sent by King Anastasius and their entry into the abbey, it was revealed to them in a dream, that they should not remove the stones placed by the angel from their place, but should put the great stone blocks on top of them; and they did just as it had been revealed to them (cf. §§2.81).

(LIX. 15-19)

⁶² M. C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), pp. 511-28, and n. 39 above.

⁶³ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207.

⁶⁴ See Ch. 6.

⁶⁵ As suggested by M. C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), p. 527.

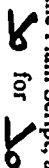

⁶⁶ *Chr. Amida 569*, VIII, 5, pp. 81-2; cf. *Leit. Severus V*, Nos. 14, 15, pp. 389-95; *Leit. 530*, p. 83 [cf. Rahmani, *Sinica Syriaca* (1904), pp. 35-6]; cf. Honigsmann, *Événements*, p. 73; M. C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), pp. 526-7.

⁶⁷ *Chr. Amida 569*, VII, 6, p. 37.

⁶⁸ Section 3.

In Chapter 2 it was argued that the 'building' which was measured out by the angel and Mor Simeon, according to the foundation legend, was in fact no more than a rectangular enclosure with three doors, containing at the east end an apse towards which prayers were directed.⁶⁹ If this is right, it is possible that the orientation of the primitive oratory was indeed respected – which may explain why the Anastasian church is in fact orientated well to the north of true east – and very probable that its relatively flimsy materials were incorporated as a kind of holy relic in the foundations of the building, perhaps by being reduced to smithereens to make a flat base for the 'great stone blocks' (hence the 'little pebbles and chips of rock which were laid by the angel and Mor Simeon' in §8). At the same time the three 'marker-stones' may have been salvaged to survive to the present day in their place near the entrance to the Anastasian church.

§4. And the temple was built and perfected; and its dimensions are as follows: length: 37 cubits, breadth: 25, height: 25, and thickness of walls: 7. (LX.19–LX.2)

The word *kyklo*, here translated 'temple', is sometimes used specifically of the congregational portion of a church.⁷⁰ In §§2, 8 and 9 it connotes the whole of the church, but in §§5 and 7 it certainly has the restricted sense 'nave'. The way §5 begins suggests that it has this meaning also in §4; if that is so, we are here offered measurements representing the dimensions of the nave. It can be calculated from another passage in the *Qarmin Trilogy* that our writer's cubit was roughly equal to 40 cm.⁷¹ These measurements can therefore be rendered as (approx.) 14.8 m; 10 m; 10 m; and 2.8 m. The last three correspond well with the actual measurements of the surviving church, but the longer axis of its nave is in fact c.18.5 m (see the scale-drawn plans of Preusser, Bell and myself (fig. 44), and contrast Socin's estimate of 20 m, Socin also overestimated the height considerably). This difficulty could be removed by emending the text, reading instead '47 cubits' (18.8 m); the easiest way to explain such a corruption is to suppose that the scribe copied from a text in which the numbers were represented by letters of the Syriac alphabet in the Plain Script, and that he mistook MIM ('40') for WAW + LOMADH ('and 30'):  for  (LX.2–11)

§5. Beyond the temple on the east side, forming the innermost part, were built three chambers. The central chamber is the Holy of Holies. Its throne is a block of marble, of length six and a half spans and of breadth four and a half. It has images sculpted on its four sides, depicting a lion, an ox, an eagle and a man. On the stone is set a vessel, gorgeous and regal, encircled by a band forged from silver, in which are 300 [sic] medallions [literally: 'things struck with a design'], with the Dispensation represented on them in pictures. Above the throne is a cherub and a bronze dome supported by and mounted upon four pillars. In the sanctuary is a hanging lamp of pure gold, suspended on a chain of silver. (LX.2–11)

As in the previous paragraph, the word 'temple' here has the restricted sense of 'nave'. A more literal translation of the first sentence would read: 'And towards the interior from the temple three chambers were built on the east side.' The word 'throne' designates the altar, which was seen as representing the throne of God in (for instance)

⁶⁹ Section 2, at fig. 11.

⁷⁰ Leroy, *CA*, 8 (1956), p. 80.

⁷¹ See p. 140.

Ezekiel's vision, a vision developed in the Revelation of John.⁷² The symbolism is made explicit in the Edessene hymn, where the 'throne' (altar, not *synthronos*) in the sanctuary 'represents the throne of Christ'.⁷³ The chamber where it stood, which our writer calls 'the Holy of Holies' (Hebrews, 9:3; cf. Exodus, 35:19), represented the tabernacle, the 'residence' of the Divine Presence. For this reason we find the *zôdia* of Ezekiel 1:10 'around the throne' (cf. Revelation, Chapter 4) and the cherub 'above' it (that is, on the dome above it). A cherub also graced the sanctuary of the near-contemporary cathedral in Edessa, supported by ten columns.⁷⁴ These probably stood around or on three sides of the altar and the cherub crowned a domed ciborium which rested on the columns. As for the *zôdia*, no parallel exists for their appearance on the sides of the altar-stone itself.⁷⁵

The 'vessel' (communion chalice) is also of great interest: Grabar prefers to see here a silver band around the chalice made up of a number of medallions representing scenes from the life of Christ (for that is the meaning of 'Dispensation'; cf. the Greek: *oikonomia*), but he balks at imagining three hundred of them, or even thirty.⁷⁶ If the number is corrupt, I think it most likely we should emend it to read 'eight'; this number is represented by the Syriac letter HETH, which might conceivably be mistaken for SHIN, representing three hundred.⁷⁷ There are several examples of the depiction of the life of Christ in eight scenes: (1) Annunciation, (2) Visitation, (3) Nativity, (4) Adoration, (5) Baptism, (6) Crucifixion, (7) Resurrection, (8) Ascension.⁷⁸

Both the altar and the vessel have long since disappeared; but the mosaics in the 'lunettes' on the north and south walls of the sanctuary (which were virtually identical in design) can be seen to have represented an altar of similar description, with a domed ciborium supported on four pillars.⁷⁹ The surviving traces have no cherub nor can the sides of the altar be examined for images, but there was a vessel and a special loaf of bread on the altar.⁸⁰ Far from accepting that our writer was inventing the furniture of the sanctuary from what he could see in the mosaics, which he omits to mention,⁸¹ I believe those mosaics were intended as 'mirror-images' in two dimensions of the three-dimensional design of the sanctuary as viewed from the nave (see on §7).

§6. The floor of the sanctuary is paved with cross-designs, formed with white, black, red, green, purple and amber marble [pieces], in various designs. The surrounding walls are revetted with marble slabs, above which, on the vault, are cross-designs [composed] of gilded tesserae. (LX.11–14)

The writer enumerates six colours of marble and these same six colours can in fact be

⁷² Common with this sense in Syriac; cf. Ch. 3, n. 167; A. Palmer, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1983), p. 136 n. 20.

⁷³ *Sigillito*, verse 19; pace K. E. McVey, *DOP* 37 (1983), pp. 905, 106, where the reference to T. Klauser, art. 'Altar', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 1, p. 353, contradicts her interpretation.

⁷⁴ *Sigillito*, verse 18; note that all MSS of both texts have the singular, *kyro*, in spite of Exodus 25:22.

⁷⁵ Grabar, *CA* 8 (1956), p. 86. ⁷⁶ Grabar, *CA* 8 (1956), pp. 85–6.

⁷⁷ The same conflation caused the corruption of *hamoth* to *shemoth* in Ch. *John Eph.* 385, ll. 5, *extrac.*, fol. 189a; cf. Ch. *Amida* 309, x.16, p. 197 n. 6; *nshitho* for *nshitho*.

⁷⁸ Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pls. 33, 34, 40, 41. ⁷⁹ Hawkins/Mundell, *Mosaics*, pl. 35.

⁸⁰ Hawkins/Mundell, *Mosaics*, pl. 35. ⁸¹ As conjectured by Hawkins/Mundell, *Mosaics*, p. 292.

seen in the surviving pavement.⁸² The marble slabs with which the walls were revetted have disappeared; but small pieces of broken, white marble slabs have been used to repair the pavement.⁸³ The writer implies that the whole expanse of the walls was covered with marble, forgetting the mosaics in the lunettes; I think his negligence may be due to the fact that these mosaics (being mere 'reflections': see on §5) did not add anything of substance to the 'symbolic furniture' of the sanctuary.

§7 Back in the temple again, on either side of the entrance to the sanctuary, are fixed two bronze trees, each of height 20 cubits. On the leaves of the trees there were [*sic*] places for trembling lanterns, one hundred and eighty on each tree, and [there were] fifty silver chains [attached to the branches] from top to bottom [of the trees], on which [were] suspended bronze objects resembling scarlet eggs, and cauldrons, animals, birds, crosses, crowns, bells, lamps [?] and wheels, some of which [were] of gold and some of silver and some of bronze. It is quite impossible to calculate a figure that would represent the combined weight of all these things. (LX.14–LXI.2)

'Temple' here, as in §§5 and 6, means 'nave'.⁸⁴ The writer began by giving the dimensions of the nave, then described the sanctuary; now he moves back into the nave to describe the trees which flanked the entrance to the sanctuary. It makes better sense to describe things this way round, because, while the trees are there to frame the altar, the *symbolic movement* is from the altar outwards.

The scriptural key is to be found in Ezekiel, Chapter 47 and Revelation, Chapter 22. In the first passage the seer describes the stream of water which flowed out from under the threshold of the holy place and the numerous trees on either bank of this stream. The water of the stream was life-giving and, because it came out of the holy place, the trees which drank of it had undying leaves and their ever-ripening fruit brought healing to those that ate it. This version is developed in Revelation, where the stream of the water of life is described as proceeding 'from the House of God and of the Lamb'; the 'tree of life' stands on either side of the stream, offering its fruit for the healing of the nations. The 'tree of life' is of course the Cross of Christ.⁸⁵

A congregation instructed in this would have seen more in the aspect of the sanctuary than actually met the eye. They would have seen a way into the holy place through the Tree of Life, that is, the Cross; an intimation of Paradise in the representation of lush vegetation; the throne of God within with attendant beasts and representative cherub and the One who came down upon it in the Eucharist; the stream of living water in the Liturgy of the Word, read from the threshold of the sanctuary; and the fruit of the tree in the sacrament itself, brought forward at the high point of the ceremony from the altar to the threshold and offered as 'the holy things to the holy people'. The concept which united all these symbols was that of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is probably this that led Philoxenos of Mabbugh to make a comparison between Jerusalem and Qartmin; for

⁸² Pace Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 282; cf. pp. 138–40, below.

⁸³ See fig. 43 and Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pls. 47, 48.

⁸⁴ Here most clearly distinguished from the sanctuary.

⁸⁵ The Book of Revelation was not included in the official lectionary of the Syrian Orthodox church but it was known in the monasteries of Tur 'Abdin, where it was copied in the late twelfth century (Glynn, *The Apocalypse*, pp. cxiii) in a translation which may be that commissioned by Philoxenos of Mabbugh some years before our church was built (*ibid.*, pp. xciv–xcix; cf. *ibid.*, Ch. vii).

there is no obvious correspondence between the ancient monuments and city plan of the earthly Jerusalem and the buildings of the abbey.⁸⁶

Grabar has discussed the Constantinopolitan and the pagan Syrian ceremonial trees, which are related to the trees of our church.⁸⁷ The candelabras ranged above the entrance to the sanctuary in the church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople contained crosses (the Tree of Life) and were assimilated to trees by a contemporary poet.⁸⁸ Lucian describes the burning of great trees in the precinct of the Syrian goddess at Hierapolis in the second century, after their branches had been hung with animals and birds and gold and silver objects and articles of clothing.⁸⁹ The custom of decorating cultic trees with 'precious objects and sweet-smelling herbs of every kind' is attested, supposedly for the sixth century, in a pagan village of Armenia visited and converted by Mor Aho. When he arrived, he found the inhabitants feasting and carousing under such a tree; they were sacrificing cattle and sheep in front of it. There were virgins, too, in plenty, adorned with finery and dedicated for the day to indiscriminate 'sacred' harlotry under the tree.⁹⁰

Whatever the cultural or cultic background of the trees (and the *ex votos* hung on them are certainly reminiscent of paganism⁹¹) their Christian symbolism cannot be denied. Hawkins and Mundell incline to attribute the trees to the imagination of the writer, suggesting that the only trees that were ever to be seen in the church were the images in the mosaics.⁹² The tree-like candelabras in Hagia Sophia, however, make the existence of bronze trees in a sixth-century church built at the abbey by craftsmen sent from the City plausible enough.⁹³ Besides, the writer must have had a vivid imagination indeed if he invented these extraordinary objects. Rather, the mosaics themselves should be seen as derivative; they reproduce, with some artistic licence, the view to be had of the sanctuary from the nave, with the domed altar flanked by the trees. This 'paradise-image' was thus made threefold as a symbol of the Trinity.

The height of the trees (8 metres) is astounding. They must have come right up under the corbels from which the vaulting arches spring. That they were 'fixed' we may take to mean 'fixed with brackets to the wall'; for this alone makes their height credible.⁹⁴ The objects (cauldrons and so on) should be imagined as small trinkets. The item marked in my translation with a query is corrupt in the text; Nau offers an emendation which, though unattested, might be understood as 'carved objects'.⁹⁵ But carved objects would hardly be included in a list of things made of precious metal. I suggest that we should read *lampidhe*, 'lamps'; this involves supposing that MIM was mistaken again for WAW followed by LOMADH (cf. p. 124), and that DOLATH and OLAF were left off

⁸⁶ xviii.8–11; see p. 115. ⁸⁷ Grabar, *CA* 8 (1956), pp. 86–91.

⁸⁸ Paul the Silentiary, *Description of Hagia Sophia*, ed. P. Friedländer, pp. 251–2 lines 871–83; cf. fig. 8 on p. 288 and commentary on p. 293. ⁸⁹ Lucian, *de dea Syria*, §49, p. 22.

⁹⁰ *L. Aho*, foll. 187a–189a, esp. fol. 187b. ⁹¹ Grabar, *CA* 8 (1956), pp. 89–91.

⁹² Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 292.

⁹³ I am grateful to O.P. Nicholson for pointing out a parallel in Luitprand of Cremona's (tenth-century) *Antipodosis*, 6.5: 'Aerea, sed deaurata quaedam arbor ante imperatoris sedile stabat, cuius ramos itidem aereae diversi generis deaurataeque aves replebant.'

⁹⁴ The plaster on the wall prevents inspection of the stone for traces of such brackets. Two of the stone blocks outside the west door of the church stood until 1973 on either side of the entrance to the sanctuary; they may have been bases for the bronze trees (cf. fig. 9; p. 39). ⁹⁵ cf. Leroy, *CA* 8 (1956), p. 81.

the end of the word, which might be due to a tear in the page of the manuscript from which our scribe was copying. This is a tentative emendation only.

The last problem in this difficult paragraph is the change from present to past tense.⁹⁶ Grabar attempts to explain it as a perfect tense, implying that the objects had been hung on the trees by particular persons at particular times.⁹⁷ This will not do, first because the verb is past continuous, and secondly because the only place where the sign of the past tense appears refers to the *places* where the lanterns were hung, which were surely a permanent feature. Probably a later scribe, unconsciously influenced by the fact that, by his time, these things had fallen prey to some raiders and vanished, slipped in the enclitic (*h*)*wo* which makes *ith*, and by implication all that follows, belong to time past.

§8. This splendid temple was built in the middle of the abbey. It is surrounded by porticos on the north, south and west [sides]. The whole structure of the temple rests on the little pebbles and chips of rock which were laid by the angel and Mor Simeon: the ground was not excavated to sink foundations for it. On the south side the architects left this [rubble] to be shown, so that men might see that it had not been cemented or clamped together with iron. All visitors come and touch the rubble for a blessing; and the earth and the sand between the stones can be used to heal all kinds of illnesses. (LXI.1-9)

The word 'Temple' reverts in this paragraph to its wider sense, embracing the whole church. The statement that it was in the middle of the abbey should be compared with my plan (fig. 2) and with the passage in the *Book of Life* concerning repairs made to the roof of the church in 1502, where it is called 'the great broad Temple of Mor Gabriel, which is in the middle of the abbey'.⁹⁸

Of the porticos on the north and south sides undeniable traces have been found. Those on the south side show that the porticos were originally roofed with horizontal beams, supported at one end by the blocks of stone which can be seen on the south side, projecting from the wall (the existence of these may be assumed on the north and west sides also) and, at the other end, by stone arches running parallel to the walls of the church. The west portico must have had a horizontal roof, too, because otherwise the high windows on that side would have been covered up, as they are now.

§9. The finishing touches were put to this holy temple and these amazing objects and regal vessels of the highest quality were brought from the Imperial City in the year 823, in which Mor Severus was consecrated patriarch of Antioch. (LXI.9-12)

The Seleucid year 823 spans the twelve-month between 1 October 511 and 30 September 512. This date is correct for Severus' consecration; it also tallies with §1, which puts the event in the twenty-first year of Anastasius. The synchronism reinforces the impression of credibility which the whole text makes by its attention to detail and its matter-of-fact tone. The scriptural symbolism of the furniture of the sanctuary is consistent and, in some respects, unique; yet the writer does not allude to the Scriptures on which it rests, nor does he explain its meaning. It is inconceivable that a falsifier inventing such details would have used such ingenuity without taking pains to expound it. We have seen that

⁹⁶ Leroy, *CA* 8 (1956), p. 81.

⁹⁷ Grabar, *CA* 8 (1956), p. 91.

⁹⁸ *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 96.

our author constructed *a posteriori* a list of the craftsmen and experts who were needed and that it is likely they came on to Qartmin from Dara, which he does not mention. He was therefore probably not present in the abbey during those first twelve years of the sixth century; but there is no reason why he should not have been a near-contemporary. The later sixth century was so troubled that the precious objects he describes so minutely can hardly have survived the consecutive menaces of Hunnish invasions, imperial persecutions and Persian raids. The *Trilogy* states that the Persians took the last of them when they plundered the abbey about 580.⁹⁹

This building record may thus be set alongside those discussed in Chapter 2. The whole collection was probably compiled in a separate register, overlooked by the 'chronicler' of 819, but incorporated in the *Trilogy* by the author of its composite redaction. Embedded in the stable tradition of the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*, as well as the *Book of Life*, are commemorations of the emperors Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius II and Anastasius.¹⁰⁰ These were not the only Christian emperors acceptable at Qartmin. The only alternative criterion for their selection seems to be their status as benefactors of the abbey. The *Calendar* otherwise shows no dependence on the *Trilogy*.¹⁰¹ If its commemorations do not derive from our building records, then they may be said to corroborate them.

3. The identification of the church

In commenting on this text I have occasionally anticipated in assuming that the church in question is the same as the conventual church still in use at Qartmin today. There is no real doubt about this, although the reservations of Guyer and of Baumstark have never had an explicit reply.¹⁰² Guyer's instinct for architectural style prompted him to accept the early date, but he thought that the nomenclature of the abbey and the dedication of the church pointed to a date in the seventh century. In fact the Arabic name *dayr al-'umr*, derived as it is from the Syriac *dayro d-'umro*, has nothing to do with the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634-44),¹⁰³ and there is no evidence earlier than 1502 for calling the church after Gabriel of Beth Qusṭān (d. 648);¹⁰⁴ nor does the story of a connection between Gabriel and the caliph deserve to be taken seriously.¹⁰⁵ There is a sanctuary of Gabriel attached to the north-eastern corner of the church, but it is

⁹⁹ v.11-20: the context is fictitious, but the reference is no doubt to the raid of 580/1 (Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 194 n. 7; *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 891), but it may be true that the abbey was raided twice by the Persians, since the entry in *Chr. Qartmin* 819 reads: 'the Persians came up again and burned the monastery of Qartmin'.¹⁰⁰ *Cal. TA*, 10 Nov., 18 Dec., 13 Oct., 30 Jul.; *Book of Life*, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Contrast e.g. *Cal. TA*, 6 Oct. with section 14 of the *Life of Simeon*.

¹⁰² S. Guyer, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912), pp. 483-508; Baumstark, *OC* 15 (1915), pp. 111-31.

¹⁰³ Pace Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 39, who was misled by the 'Kurdish' form, *dēr 'amr*. The correct explanation is given by Peeters in *Anal. Boll.* 27 (1908) (see Sources, IC. 7), p. 130: *dēr al-Amr* is a corruption of the Syriac *dayro d-'umro*, 'monastery of the abbey', 'the abbey' being understood almost as a proper name (cf. *Chr. Gregory II*, col. 88 note). The *Berlin Paraphrase* (of 1710) has a note calling the abbey by this Syriac name, but in 1731, when it was deserted of monks and occupied by the Kurds whose centre was at Haytam Castle, it was referred to in Arabic as *Dēr al-Amr*, belonging to Haytam (Wright, *MSS London*, pp. 881-2; cf. S.P. Brock, *Ost. St.* 28 (1979), p. 169 and n. 7). The modern Turkish is *Deyrulumur manastırı*, not to be confused with the 'Monasterium Deirloomor' near Baalbek (Assemani, *Dissertatio* (1719), *sub voce*)!

¹⁰⁴ See pp. 128 and 133. ¹⁰⁵ See Ch. 5, section 1.

clear that it was added later, so that Gabriel's death provides a *terminus ante* (rather than *post*) *quem*.¹⁰⁶ The 'inconsistency' between building and description alluded to by Guyer, who derived that opinion from Baumstark, was the starting-point for an article by the latter. The argument is flawed by the fact that Baumstark used an unreliable text¹⁰⁷ and had never seen the building. Thus a hasty consultation of Bell's work on Qartmin led him to assert that the church could not possibly be described as being 'in the middle of the monastery'; and that, if the mosaics in the sanctuary are old, the rest of the church must have been added on to an earlier altar-room. In fact, there are many ruins to the east of the church in addition to the buildings on the other three sides and the structure of the church itself is integral.¹⁰⁸ From the *Berlin Paraphrase* of the *Trilogy* Baumstark derived his 'columns' (*esune*), no trace of which was recorded by Bell or Preusser;¹⁰⁹ but the correct text reads 'porticos' or 'arcades' (*esowe*) and traces of these have been found.

There remains the inconsistency between the measurements of the church and those given in the text. To Baumstark this seemed much more serious than it is, since he tried to fit them to the whole complex, not just to the nave. I have suggested a simple emendation by which the remaining inconsistency over the length of the nave can be removed.¹¹⁰

The positive evidence for identification is overwhelming. The ground plan, including the traces of three porticos, corresponds exactly with the text. The same six colours of marble can be identified in the pavement of the sanctuary as are named by our writer. The cross-designs in that pavement and in the vault mosaic provide an apt explanation of an uncommon word in the description. The wall mosaics depict an altar with a domed ciborium flanked by trees, just as the altar described in the *Trilogy* must have looked from the nave, between the two bronze trees which stood by the entrance to the sanctuary.

The *incipit* of a Greek inscription in mosaic: ἐγένετο τὸ μούσωμα... ('The mosaic work was created...'), which originally ran along the bottom edge of the wall mosaic on the south side of the sanctuary, exhibits a script which Cyril Mango attributes to the sixth century, and the style of the mosaics themselves is consistent with this date. Mango adds that it would be very odd to find a Greek inscription in this part of Mesopotamia after the sixth century.¹¹¹ This is also a reason to add to those adduced by Marlia Mundell Mango for dating the church of Ambar between 507 and 530, a church which has a very similar outline to that at Qartmin.¹¹²

At this point the reader is more than ready for a full description of the church as it stands today. Already in the previous chapter the complex around the 'cell of Gabriel' was described and interpreted, so here it may be left aside.

¹⁰⁶ See Ch. 3, section 5, b. ¹⁰⁷ That of the *Berlin Paraphrase*, foll. 78b-81a.

¹⁰⁸ Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 6: 'masses of ruined walls can be seen to the east' (see my plan, fig. 2); *ibid.*, pl. 215 shows the unity of nave and sanctuary from the exterior (the south façade).

¹⁰⁹ fol. 80b; the correct text and interpretation were in Pogon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 40-1, but Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 8, introduced the idea of an atrium. ¹¹⁰ See p. 124.

¹¹¹ C. Mango, in Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 296, with pl. 39.

¹¹² M.M. Mango, *CA* 30 (1982), pp. 48, 56-7; fig. 9.

4. Description of the conventual church (fig. 44)

However the modern visitor enters the monastery, he has to go down several steps and several levels of antiquity to the level on which the church stands. The erosion of the great stone blocks which form the triangular south façade is a further eloquent witness to its venerable age. On this side can be seen the narrow outer openings of the four windows in the south wall of the nave and of the little window in the south wall of the right-hand chamber of the sanctuary. Below the latter and to the left is a side entrance, with a semicircular arch over the lintel, which once gave direct access to the sanctuary for the clergy.¹¹³ It is now blocked up with masonry and provides cupboard-space on the inside in the remaining thickness of the wall. This must have been done before 1296 when the monks fled before a raid of 'Tatars', 'blocking the entrance (singular) of the temple with stones and mortar'; when they returned, after four months, 'they opened the entrance of the temple' again.¹¹⁴ Clearly the west entrance is meant. The same raiders removed 'the three window-grids from the south side and the window-grids from the sanctuary'.¹¹⁵ These window-grids were made of stone and traces of them have been found around the church, bearing the dates [1]300 and 1607 (in the Seleucid era).¹¹⁶ The first shows that the windows were blocked up in AD 988/9 (to judge by the report quoted above, the four east and one south window of the sanctuary and the three lower windows on the south side of the nave were fitted with grids); the second, that the grids were replaced after the raid in 1296. They were not taken out again until 1963.¹¹⁷ All the windows on the west side of the church were also blocked up, though at what date is unknown. In one of them was set an inscription commemorating the 'Persian' (Seljuk Turkish) raid of 1100, during which the church was used for fourteen days as quarters by the raiders.¹¹⁸

The message of all these blocked entrances and associated reports is clear: throughout the Middle Ages and until recent times the monastery has had to ward off potential plunderers. Churches built in Tur 'Abdin during these uncertain times always had tiny, fortress-like slits for windows and the older buildings were, without exception, adapted in this way for defence. This is what causes so many churches in this area to be so dark. Many a European visitor has taken this darkness for another sign of the supposedly 'oriental' tendency to mysticism. But, besides the motive of security, one must take into account the weather, which is cold here in winter, though snow does not often lie for more than a month. There would have been no glass in the windows, so that the architects had to compromise between light and warmth. The answer was usually to make the outer opening small but to spread the light as widely as possible in the interior by a widely splayed casement, roofed over by an arch (fig. 42). Nowhere is this more

¹¹³ Such a separate entrance to the sanctuary is found in some other monastic churches in Tur 'Abdin, e.g. that of Mor Jacob at Salah (Bell/Mango, *TA*, pl. 234).

¹¹⁴ *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 93-4.

¹¹⁵ *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 94.

¹¹⁶ See *INSCR.* A.14 and next note.

¹¹⁷ *Book of Life*, p. 129: 'In the year of our Lord 1963 at the end of October the abbot, Monk Joshua Çiçek opened three windows in the church which had been blocked up since the year 1296, as we read on the stone window-grids; the era is not specified, but the coincidence with the date of the Tatar invasion (see n. 114 above) makes it almost certain that Çiçek converted a Seleucid date (unfortunately he does not remember).

¹¹⁸ *INSCR.* B.13.

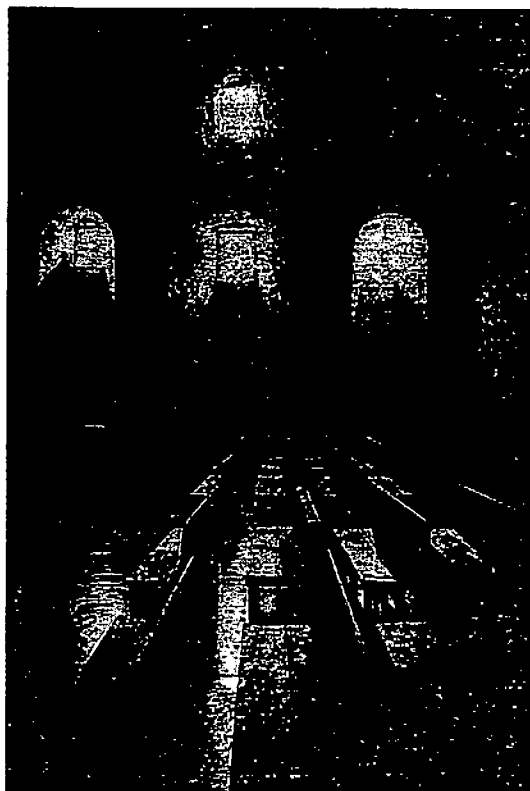


Fig. 42. The Anastasian church, Qartmin: interior, facing south (Photo: Bernt Larsson)

spectacular than in the thick walls of the Anastasian church at Qartmin. If the three windows above the portico on the west side were open, the nave would be filled with light.¹¹⁹ The two windows at nearly ground-level on that side to either side of the entrance opened under the portico and are not splayed towards the interior. They are also abnormally large on the outside. Clearly they had a different purpose. I suggest that was to give those who, for reasons of sin, sex, sickness or superfluity, had to stand outside the church, a glimpse of the sanctuary entrance, the focus of the Eucharist. The main sanctuary itself must always have been rather dark, except when the early summer sun sent its shaft in at the right angle. Perhaps here a mystical intention was indeed at play. The holy of holies would have been filled, after all, with the light of the golden hanging-lamp which, like the single window, may be a symbol of the 'Light of the World'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ cf. *Can. W-Syr.*, I, p. 10: 'Let the churches be light, both for the symbolism and for the readings.'

¹²⁰ LX.10.

Below the level of the windows on the south façade of the church are eight projecting blocks of stone at regular intervals in a single course, above which the wall is noticeably more weathered and discoloured. These were clearly intended to bear the weight of beams which would have been supported on the outside by a row of arches. The beams carried a horizontal roof and the whole structure formed one of the three porticos or arcades described in the *Trilogy* as surrounding the church on the north, west and south sides. Photographs show remains of the arches flanking the church on this side, but these were buried in concrete in 1974. It appears that the wooden roof was destroyed at one time, perhaps by the Persians about 580, and replaced at a later date by a brick vault (possibly the 'portico' funded by Patricia, the daughter of Elusṭriya, governor of Dara, in the early eighth century¹²¹). The course below that from which the beam-rests project has been chipped away on its lower side to form a wedge-shaped ledge running the length of the wall, and in this ledge is encrusted the broken base from which an arched vault sprang, made with the thin brick found in Ṭur 'Abdin as late as the mid-eighth century.¹²² This vaulted arcade had not yet been fully destroyed when Bell visited the monastery before the First World War.¹²³

The arcade on the west side of the church rests on its ancient arches, but there, too, the roof has been rebuilt with a vault, this time in masonry. The position of the outer openings of the three upper windows on this side, now concealed under the cement successor of a tiled roof which probably dated back to 1502,¹²⁴ shows that the original roof of the arcade must have been flat. It is reasonable to suppose that the original beam-rests exist here beneath the later masonry at the same level as on the south side.

The north arcade has left some traces, but also an enigma. At least two ancient, well-constructed arches flanking the church at the right distance on this side are incorporated in the north wall of the lower chamber of the 'cell of Gabriel'; but one of them is 73 cm higher than the other. Possibly the higher arch marks the former entrance to an associated building on this side, as the high arch in the temple of Mor Samuel connects it with the vaulted building to the south.

The west entrance of the church is covered by an imposing lintel formed of two great blocks of limestone (the stone used throughout the structure of the building), in the middle of which is carved an archaic cross in a roundel, very similar to the lintel cross of the church in the monastery of Mor Daniel of Aghlosh (fig. 13), probably likewise a sixth-century building.¹²⁵ To the left of the entrance, in one of the blocked-up 'squints', is a fine inscription in the hard red stone quarried in Badibbe,¹²⁶ which was set up in c. 1105 by Bishop Basil Shamly, the first official bishop of the monastery after it became a separate 'diocese' in 1088.¹²⁷

Entering the echoing nave one is struck by the massive thickness of the walls which bear the great transverse barrel-vault. Arches let into the walls at intervals all around the nave add to the available space, while strengthening the structure. Those on either

¹²¹ *INSCR.* C.1. ¹²² cf. *INSCR.* B.1-7, dating the church at Ṣalah.

¹²³ Bell/Mango, *TA*, pl. 216; cf. Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pl. 4 (taken in 1972).

¹²⁴ cf. *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 96.

¹²⁵ Wiessner, *Ruinenstätten*, p. 58, pl. XII.

¹²⁶ *INSCR.* B.13; according to local informants Badibbe is the only source for this stone in Ṭur 'Abdin.

¹²⁷ Pognon, *Inscriptions*, p. 48; for the date 1105, see the full account of the *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 91-2, quoted in my discussion of *INSCR.* B.13, pp. 224-25.

side of the entrance to the Holy of Holies, which is directly opposite the main entrance (also over-arched in the thickness of the inner wall) contain tombs in which lie holy relics.¹²⁸ Upon the tombs rest heavy office books, written out by hand. These niches, like the two side entrances and the higher main entrance to the sanctuary, are closed by brightly stained and sequined iconographic curtains in a distinctive local style.¹²⁹ The three sanctuary entrances have massive lintels with semicircular relieving arches; at the sides the recess under the arch pierces the wall through, but in the centre it stops short of that. There are two roughly rectangular recesses in the east wall of the nave, one on each side, between the side-entrances of the sanctuary and the tombs of the saints. I did not measure them, but they are about 1 x 1.5 m and about 10 cm deep. There are similar rectangular recesses in the east wall of the nave of the church of Mor Jacob at Ṣalāḥ, one on each side of the entrance to the sanctuary. Might they have been designed for holy pictures, on the analogy of the Greek iconostasis?¹³⁰

Dotted about the walls of the nave are small rectangular cubby-holes which were probably dug out of the original stonework as convenient nests for the long beeswax tapers used to read the offices by night.

The floor of the nave was repaired in 1973, covering the flagstones seen by Preusser and Bell. At that date also the stone kneading-trough – a monument to the community's prosperity in the eighth century – was moved away from its earlier (though not its original) position on a masonry base in front of the sanctuary entrance, where it had served as a book-rest during the offices, to the north-west corner of the nave.¹³¹ The elaborate font in the south-east corner of the nave (dated 1968), like the elegant bell-tower (dated 1971) which crowns the south façade, attests the latter-day wealth of Qartmin and the skill of local Christian stone-masons. (The second, south-west bell-tower, built in 1979 to house the bell from the abandoned church of Mor Cyriac in Kfarburan, and the present stone altar in the Holy of Holies, which replaced a former wooden altar in 1951, are less accomplished works.)

The barrel-vault of the nave, which has a greater span than any other in Ṭur 'Abdin, is twice ribbed across with stone arches springing from projecting blocks in the upper stone courses of the already curving walls and knitted together in the square areas between by concentric brickwork in chiasitic formation. An almost identical structure is that of the eighth-century vault of the splendid monastic church at Ṣalāḥ, though there the vault is edged with fancy brickwork in patterns of herring-bone and interlocking pantiles, which apparently does not exist at Qartmin. This is not to say that the

brickwork was not intended to be seen, although since 1867 it has been largely concealed by plaster.¹³²

The ground plan of the church is like that of most monastic churches in Ṭur 'Abdin:¹³³ a communal hall with its greatest length from north to south, designed for the antiphonal singing of the offices around book-rests at either end, alternating with prostrations and 'standings' in long rows facing east (reminiscent of congregational practice among the Muslims); one main entrance on the west side, there being no need to divide the congregation by sex; the sanctuary, for all its holiness, an adjunct rather than the *raison d'être* of the building, divided into three altar-rooms, perhaps because of the need for a number of priested monks to 'offer the sacrifice' separately. Balancing the sanctuary chambers on the west side of the hall was an arcade (in some cases, a long, thin antechamber), which may have played a liturgical role as a place of prayer for novices. At Qartmin there were arcades on the north and south sides also. Some monastic churches of this type have other associated structures, some have none. The focus of monastic life was the daily round of offices, not the Eucharist, however important the latter may have been. John of Ephesus tells us a great deal about almost every aspect of coenobitism, but nothing at all about a common celebration of the Eucharist.¹³⁴ This does not mean that such a celebration was not held, but it tells us something about John's priorities as a monk. The monastic church of Ṭur 'Abdin reflects this emphasis.

The typical parish church of Ṭur 'Abdin, by contrast, is designed with the congregational Eucharist in mind.¹³⁵ A longitudinal nave directs attention towards the apse of the sanctuary, which is not closed off by a wall, though a screen or a curtain (together with the raised sanctuary platform) is used to symbolize the division between holy and lay precincts and to make visible the alternate public and mystical aspects of the Eucharistic liturgy. In the length of the nave a division is effected between men and women, the women normally sitting at the back behind a screen. (An ancient screen stood in the church of Mor Azazael at Kfarze on either side of a simple *bēma*, that is, a round pulpit, being an unfenced stone slab supported by four stone columns, which the priest or reader used to mount by steps from the east.¹³⁶) Many parish churches have two entrances in the south wall, one for either sex; some monastic churches also have more than one entrance, but there the essential difference is between unpriested 'brothers' and priested monks, who can enter the sanctuary directly by a separate door. Corresponding with the long transverse antechamber on the west side of the monastic

¹²⁸ See Ch. 2, n. 68.

¹²⁹ Several from other churches in Ṭur 'Abdin are illustrated in Wiessner, *Kultbauten*; made in Mardin, they are also a distinctive mark of the churches where emigrants from Ṭur 'Abdin worship.

¹³⁰ M. Mundell, in Bryer/Herrin, *Iconoclasm* (1977), p. 72, concludes that the Syrian Orthodox preferred iconic panels to figural wall-decoration. Her case for doubting whether icons were kept on permanent display in the main churches is a less strong one, however, and one of the chief testimonies adduced for it can be otherwise explained: *Chr. Amida* 569, vii.4, p. 28 tells us that Kawad found an icon of Christ in the treasury of the church of the Forty Martyrs at Amida, where it had probably been placed for security during the Persian siege.

¹³¹ Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), pp. 253–4; cf. C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, I (1910), p. 370; Preusser, *Baudenkmäler*, p. 31; Bell/Mango, *TA*, pls. 217–18; according to M. Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage* (1915), p. 356, there was an oven for 'altar-breads' under the slab.

¹³² Pace Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 33.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. ix; the exceptions are the Nestorian monasteries on the southern escarpment, a fact which should be put down to the denominational difference (Wiessner, *Ruinenstätten*, p. 5; cf. W. Liebeschuetz, *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), p. 21, with note 31). Baumstark, *OC* 15 (1915), pp. 111–31, adduces evidence that the Nestorian Eucharist was a public one, which would explain why they did not adopt the type of monastic church here in question.

¹³⁴ See Ch. 3, n. 54.

¹³⁵ Bell/Mango, *TA*, pp. viii–ix; M.M. Mango, *CA* 30 (1982), p. 57, would see the church at Ambar as a 'parish' church in spite of its monastic plan; Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, 11 is on the churches with transverse nave, 11 on those with longitudinal nave; E. Heinrich, *Kunst des Orients* 1 (1950), pp. 5–19, would derive both from the same ancient Mesopotamian origins, suggesting that the distinction grew up because many monastic churches were modelled on that at Qartmin, where the orientation of a former temple was preserved, while the altar was shifted into a side-room to be approximately at the east.

¹³⁶ Pogon, *Inscriptions*, p. 91; Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. 45, pl. 158.

church, and perhaps supporting the view that this was a parallel prayer-hall of lesser degree, the antechamber of the typical parish church runs parallel to the nave on the south side. In this case it may have been intended for those whom the canons of the church had forbidden for a while to enter the church itself, by way of penance.¹³⁷ Supplementary chambers behind or beside the apse of the sanctuary were either sanctuaries of particular saints or vestries for the deacons and lower orders of village clergy.¹³⁸

The church itself is always dedicated to a saint, of whose body, usually, it claims to possess a relic.¹³⁹ The conventual church of a monastery, by contrast, is not normally placed under any invocation, although other churches in the monastery may have specific dedications. There it is the burial vaults of the holy founders and former holy men which provide the main focus of veneration and the central locus of sanctity. They are visited regularly, for example, after evening prayers on a Saturday.¹⁴⁰ The monastery is known, not after a patron saint, chosen from the canons of the church, but after 'the holy men who are in it': significantly, the word 'entombed' is often left out.¹⁴¹

The village church of ʿTur ʿAbdin has another feature which is absent from the monastic model: an outdoor oratory (*beth ʃlutho*) on the south side of the church building, consisting of a simple apse at the east end of a courtyard.¹⁴² As the *mihrab* is the essential feature of a Muslim place of prayer, so this prayer-niche represents the minimal material expression of a Christian oratory. No doubt the villagers came in ancient times, as they come still now, three times to church in the course of the day. To avoid all the bother of taking off mud-caked boots at the door of the church and putting on the slippers provided, it may often have seemed simpler in fine weather to hold the prayers outside. Perhaps, also, as the custom of filling these apses with funerary inscriptions suggests, burial services were often said in the outdoor oratory: from there the way was more direct with the body to the grave and unpleasant smells were dissipated in the open air. Occasionally, clergy were buried in a vault underneath the apse, as, apparently, at Heshterek.¹⁴³

This excursus was necessary to put the design of the Anastasian church at Qartmin in its true perspective. Baumstark was surely wrong to try to date all the churches of ʿTur ʿAbdin with open sanctuary (that is, parish churches) before those with a wall between sanctuary and nave (the monastic churches).¹⁴⁴ To mention only a practical consideration: the dividing wall was structurally unavoidable in the latter, inasmuch as it was needed to support the barrel-vault of the nave. It need not be liturgically significant.

¹³⁷ This is what the canons mean by 'separation from the church'; e.g. *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 13 (No. 29) [Nau, p. 104 (No. 188)]. ¹³⁸ That behind the sanctuary is usually dedicated to the Mother of God.

¹³⁹ A preliminary list of dedications in ʿTur ʿAbdin, derived from Bell/Mango, *TA*, Wiessner, *Kultbauten* and Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 31–2, includes Abay, Abhay, Abraham, Addai, Aho, Azazael, Bar-ḥadh-b-shabo, Baršawmo, Bossus-and-Susan, Cyriac, Dimej, Dodho, Elijah, Ephrem, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Isaiah (of Aleppo), Jacob (of Nisibis), Jacob (of Serugh), John (the Baptist), John (of Kfone), Lazarus (of Harran), Malke, Mary (the Mother of God), Nicolas (Zokhe), Philoxenos (Akhsoyoy), Qawme, Samuel, Sergius-and-Bacchus, Shmuni, Simeon (of the Olives), Simeon (of Qartmin), Sowo, Stephen, Theodore; only those of Philoxenos (Midyat) and Simeon of the Olives (Habsenus) are derived from historical events (see pp. 113, 164).

¹⁴⁰ Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 254.

¹⁴¹ The title of the *Qartmin Trilogy* (1.2) is a case in point.

¹⁴² Bell/Mango, *TA*, p. x.

¹⁴³ Pogon, *Inscriptions*, p. 191; cf. Appendix, section 1.

¹⁴⁴ Baumstark, *OC* 15 (1915), pp. 114–16.

Besides, the Anastasian church at Qartmin and the contemporary church on a very similar pattern at Ambar near Dara are proof that whatever liturgical conclusions can be drawn from such a ground plan apply already in the early sixth century in our area. Baumstark, a keen theorist of liturgy, was inclined to see the 'closed sanctuary' as evidence of a mystic celebration of the Eucharist, as opposed to the primitive open celebration.¹⁴⁵ He may be right. But he must be wrong in dating the introduction of that development in the Syrian Orthodox church as late as the mid-seventh century.¹⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that all Baumstark's evidence for the 'open' liturgy comes from the Roman Catholic and Nestorian churches, and that the Greek, Coptic and Syrian Orthodox evidence in his article uniformly points to the 'secret' liturgy.¹⁴⁷ Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) is his earliest Syrian Orthodox witness, but there is no reason why the practice should not have antedated him. The mystic celebration may already have been current, at least in monasteries, by the early sixth century.

The sanctuary of the church of Qartmin, though it is architecturally a mere extension added to the conventual prayer-hall, is compensated, at least in its central chamber, by the magnificent mosaics with which it is decorated. They are unique in our region and of immense importance for the history of this art in the Byzantine world, as very few pre-Justinianic wall mosaics have survived. The Qartmin mosaics have been adduced as an early instance of the aversion from animate figures in representational art which is thought to have been widespread in Mesopotamia before the age of Iconoclasm.¹⁴⁸ This tenet is well established already and the rarity of our mosaics makes their significance disproportionate in discussions of this vital question of Byzantine history.

The vault mosaic shows three crosses in medallions ranged from west to east above the altar in the direction of the curve of the vault. The space around the crosses is filled with the curling tendrils, leaves and grape-clusters of four vines growing out of four wide-bellied vases, the stems of which are lodged in the corners of the vault. This design is bordered by three bands of patterned decoration. The border, which forms a rectangle in the curve of the vault, also forms semicircular frames on the north and south sides for the mosaics which filled the upper part of the side walls of the sanctuary, the 'lunettes'. These have been badly damaged, especially that on the north side, but it is clear that both represented the same scene, namely an altar flanked by two trees and surrounded by four columns with capitals, on which rests a domed ciborium. The upper surface of the altar in the south lunette mosaic is partially preserved; it seems to show two chalices and a round loaf of bread marked with a grid-pattern. Lamps hang from horns above the columns which support the dome. Around the trees is an undulating garden with shrubs and flowers; and there is fruit on the branches of some of the trees. The background here, as on the vault, is gold.

It is certainly remarkable that no person or animal, not even a bird, is depicted. But this need not indicate aversion from animate representation as such. Indeed, if we are to believe the report preserved in the *Trilogy*, it cannot be such an indication, since the figures of a cherub and of the Four Beasts of Ezekiel's vision adorned the original altar,

¹⁴⁵ Baumstark, *OC* 15 (1915), p. 115.

¹⁴⁶ Baumstark, *OC* 15 (1915), p. 129.

¹⁴⁷ cf. n. 133 above.

¹⁴⁸ Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 294; see also the plates accompanying that article and pl. 30 in edd. Garsoian et al., *East of Byzantium* (1982).

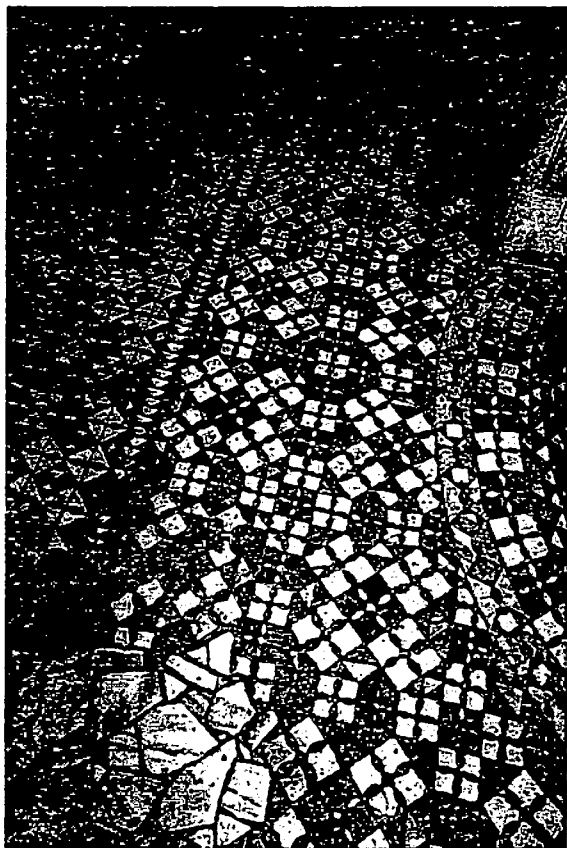
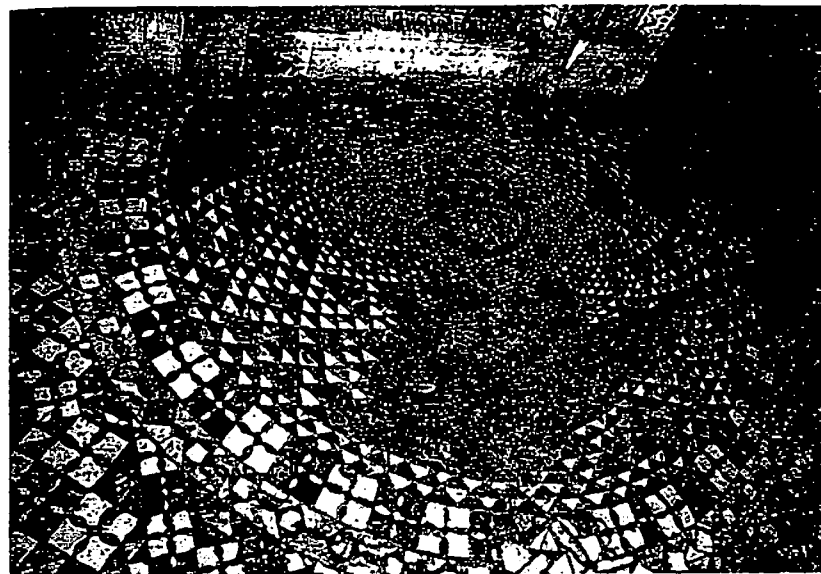


Fig. 43. Two photographs of the *opus sectile* pavement in the Anastasian sanctuary at Qartmin

for which the mosaics were made (like a precious casket to contain a pearl).¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the chalice with which the emperor endowed it was decorated with medallions representing Christ's earthly ministry (LX.7-8); and 'animals and birds' were among the trinkets hung in the bronze trees by the sanctuary door (LX.20). But if it was not because of a principle based on a literal interpretation of the Second Commandment, why were the mosaics made 'aniconic'? The answer may well be that they were conceived as a splendid background for the altar and were thus designed to direct attention towards it, not away from it, just as the church as a whole was made plain in

¹⁴⁹ cf. Preusser, *Baudenkmäler*, p. 32: 'Während die ganze Kirche von aussen wie von innen kahl und unscheinbar aussieht mit fast absichtlicher Vermeidung des geringsten Ornaments, ist man hier [im Altarraum] mit der Ausschmückung geradezu verschwenderisch umgegangen'; moreover, the worshipper in the sanctuary itself should have eyes only for the altar itself.



the extreme in order to direct attention towards the sanctuary. If this is right, then our mosaics are not relevant to the question of iconoclasm.¹⁵⁰

The walls of the sanctuary below the level of the mosaics, that is, below the bottom of the vault and the top of the doorway, were originally revetted with marble, fragments of which have been used to patch the pavement. The two sides of the west wall are now adorned with nineteenth-century paintings in a style reminiscent of the illustrated Gospel Book in Azakh/Idil.¹⁵¹ Doorways in the western end of the north and south walls communicate with the relatively uninteresting side-chambers of the sanctuary. Recesses in the walls of the Holy of Holies serve as a basin and as bookshelves.

The pavement of the sanctuary (fig. 43) is a fine example of *opus sectile* in six colours of marble, black and white and red being used everywhere, while green is used only in the whorl and amber only for the central disc (around which this whorl appears, by the interplay of light and dark in a pattern of radiating curves, to flicker first, and then to spin). Purple was apparently used only in a single band across the threshold of the sanctuary. Around the whorl, which is ringed by a band of crosses in squares and another of lozenges, a rectangular area framed by rows of 'arrow-heads' baffles the eye with a grid of crosses in squares, alternately light on dark and dark on light. Within the larger squares formed by the grid are further crosses, aligned on the diagonals of the squares, which themselves are composed of little squares containing crosses, that in the

¹⁵⁰ The alleged iconoclastic tendencies of Severan monophysites in general have been shown by S.P. Brock (in Bryer/Herrin, *Iconoclasm* (1977), pp. 53-7) to have been falsely attributed to them.

¹⁵¹ H. Anschütz, *Ost. St.* 31 (1982), p. 330.

centre being white on black, while the four which form the arms are black on white. The outer border of the pavement is formed mainly of triangular pieces which continue the diagonal thrust of the crosses within the grid. Here again the *Letimotiv* is the cross, picked out again and again and often superimposed on different scales by the subtle distribution of the three main colours, giving the patterns an elusiveness which draws the eye for ever inwards.

If I have described the pavement at some length, it is chiefly to show how aptly the author of the ancient building record described those who made it as 'men skilled in executing composite patterns of cross-designs', to paraphrase a little the difficult phrase analysed in my commentary on the text.¹³² With this final stroke of genius ends the catalogue of the noble features of this church, which travellers of the nineteenth century hardly considered it worthwhile to mention.¹³³

5. The domed octagon

There is another building of great interest which stands near the north-west corner of the Anastasian church and which may be contemporary with it, although the silence of the author who described the latter stands against this hypothesis. The 'great dome which is next to the kitchens' is described in the *Trilogia*, where the writer says that the great stone kneading-rough which is now in the north-west corner of the conventual church was originally placed there (cf. *INSCR.* A.6):

This dome in which the stone is placed is constructed on and supported by eight arches. Its height is twenty-five cubits, its breadth twenty-five cubits and its length twenty-five, and it is round. (LXXXII.18-20)

This description leaves no doubt about the identification of the dome. It is the octagon most recently studied by Leroy and somewhat inaccurately drawn and planned by his architect (fig. 44 shows a more accurate plan).¹³⁴ Leroy gives the diameter as 10.50 m, and the height is about the same. The size of our author's cubit was therefore about 0.40 m. This makes good sense of the measurements of the Anastasian church, as we have seen; it also corresponds with the measurements in spans given for the stone kneading-rough, which show that a span, which is normally half a cubit, was c.0.20 m. The 'kitchens' (*beih shabe*) which were next to the dome must be identified with a long, rectangular chamber on the west side of the octagon, the low vault of which is covered with the soot of many fires.

This chamber was designed and built together with the octagon. It has a brick vault

¹³² See p. 120.

¹³³ Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, I (1852), p. 56: 'one of the monks pointed out to me with evident pride a pavement of Dutch tiles before the principal altar'; Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, I (1910), p. 370: 'Die einfache Kirche, der Grundriss rechteckig, in der Mitte ein grosser Steinisch als Altar, war ein Neubau. Several observers mistook the stone slab (cf. *INSCR.* A.6) for an altar, though in fact it was only used as a book-rest during the offices (Bargum, T.4, p. 48)'.
¹³⁴ J. Leroy, *CA 25* (1976), pp. 1-6, *id.*, *CRAI/BL* (1968), p. 491, fig. 3: the north-eastern corner of the octagon is unnecessarily obscured, the section drawing omits the window above the arch communicating with the long vaulted building to the west and places the external ground-level against the east side of the octagon. In the latter article the roof is closed over the oculus in the section drawing of the dome. See also Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', pl. 5.

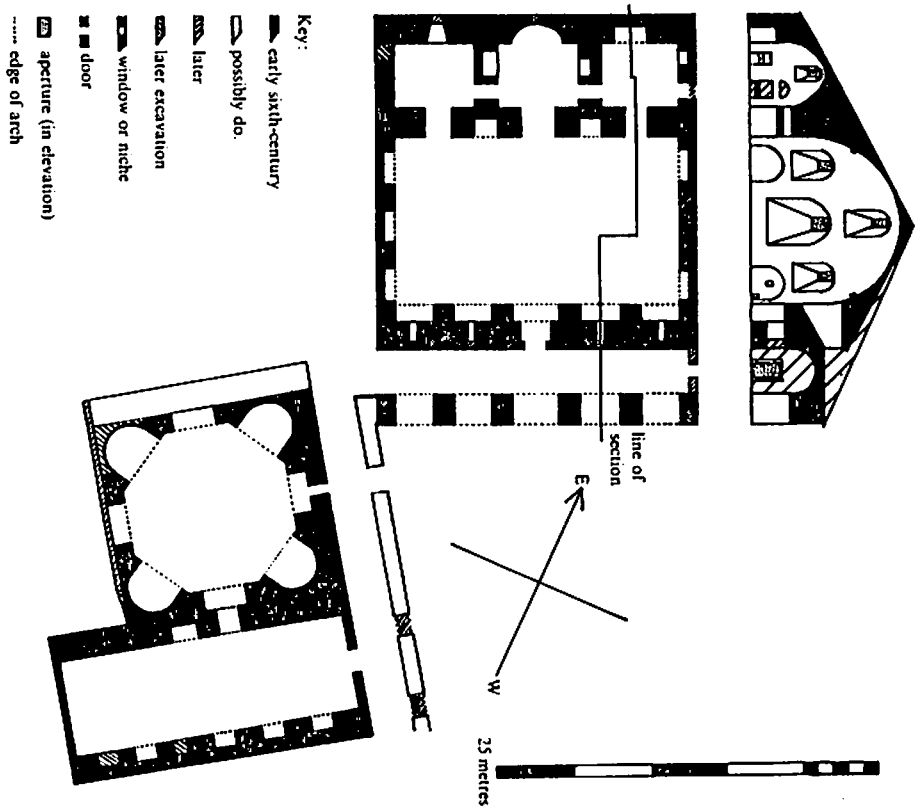


Fig. 44. Section of conventual church with plan of same and of adjacent octagon, Garmir Abbey

constructed like that of the Anastasian church, except that the two arches which divide the length into three equal square areas are made of brick also, not of stone. The curve of the vault is continued in the stone courses of the lower wall, rejoining the vertical at about 1.5 m above the floor. At this level a layer of three courses of brick runs along the side walls; a similar layer can be seen on the outside of the north wall at a higher level and single courses of stone interrupt the lower courses of the brick vault on the east side. *Arcozolia* in the walls (four originally in the west wall and one to the left of the arch connecting this chamber with the octagon) are arched over with brick in the same way as the inner casement of the windows in the great church. The arches on the west side may originally have been open to communicate with a (now inaccessible) ancient

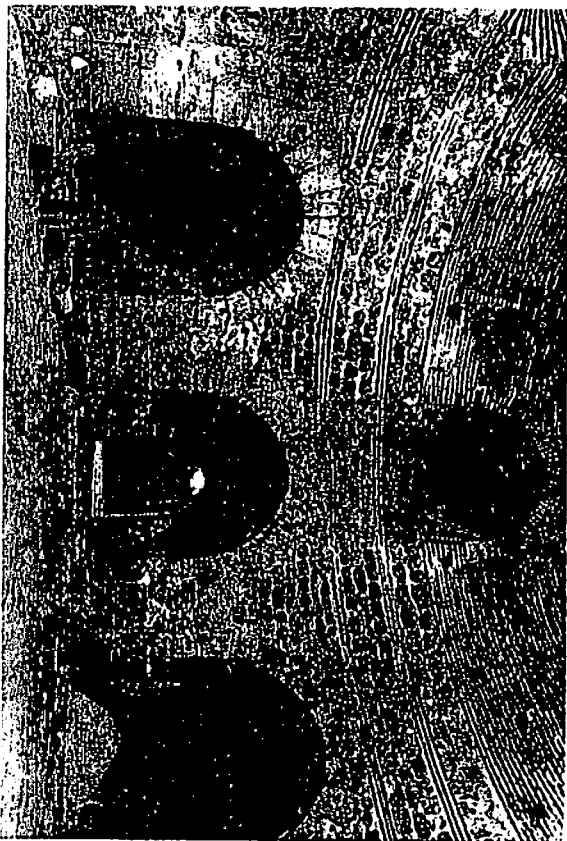


Fig. 45. Octagon adjacent to the conventual church at Qarmin, now called the 'Dome of Theodora'; interior, facing west (Photo: G. House, by courtesy of the Courtauld Institute)

building between our chamber and the burial vaults. There is now a doorway in the south wall giving onto the corridor which links the Anastasian church with the Theodosian complex, a corridor with a partially preserved brick vault at the east end, suggesting an early date. (On the south side of this corridor are several vaulted chambers of uninteresting construction, which must also be ancient.)

The communicating passage between the 'kitchens' and the octagon is formed by two arches, a lower and narrower brick arch, the size of which is determined by the height of the vault in the 'kitchens', to which building it belongs, and a higher, broader, stone arch which is one of the eight supporting the dome (fig. 45). These eight arches are constructed of regular blocks with ledges projecting from voussoirs on either side, above which a wooden frame had to be built to allow the central blocks to be set in their place. (Such projections are also found in the same position on the stone arches of the vault of the Anastasian church and in the contemporary church of Ambar.) The octagon formed by the arches is converted into a circle by the stone courses which fill the spaces between them, and this circle is defined by a layer of brickwork in three courses which rests on the top of the arches like a hoop. Above this are three more courses of stone, then another, narrower, hoop of brickwork, again in three courses. Then there are two more courses of stone, completing the drum before the final transition to the brickwork of the dome itself. This is constructed in circles, leaving an *oculus* about 0.60 m wide above the centre of the building (fig. 46). The exterior of the building is a cube, just as in the octagonal mausolea described in Chapter 2; like them, the octagon has

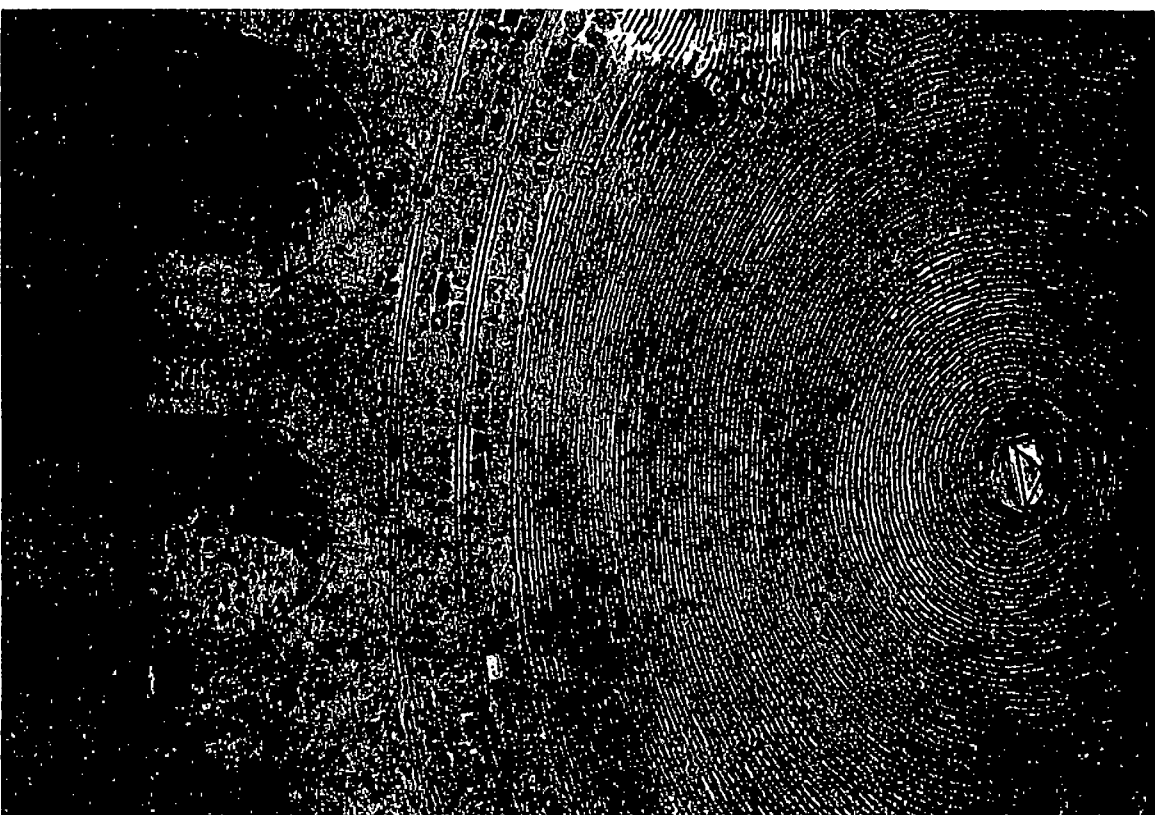


Fig. 46. The 'Dome of Theodora': interior, facing north (Photo: Berni Larsson)

deep recesses behind the corner arches, round-bottomed in three corners but square-sided at the north-east corner, where a doorway connects it with another room to the east. The upper 'horns' of the cube are made into small rooms braced by brick arches and roofed in brick.

The arch on the south side of the octagon contains a doorway with a monolithic lintel and shallow relieving arch in brick, which gives onto the corridor described above. (In common with all the old doorways in the monastery and with the church at Ambar, for instance, this doorway has no monolithic jambs: the lintel rests on the stone courses of the wall directly.¹⁵⁷) Above the arch which frames this doorway is a window, the fanned brick arch of which projects into the brickwork of the dome. There is another, larger, window (now blocked) on the west side. Its base lies on the upper of the two hoops of brickwork which break up the courses of the stone drum below the dome, about one metre higher than the south window; this is because of the vaulted chamber on that side, the roof of which would have blocked a lower window. The absence of a window at any height on the east side suggests that it was already abutted by other buildings, though clearly not the same as survive today (cf. p. 133). Three niches in the south-eastern corner of the octagon are closed above by shallow arches in brick. On the north side the central arch is closed by a wall; but the wall is not contemporary with the octagon, since it contains a brick arch springing from a stone capital, which is intersected by the arch of the octagon. The buildings may formerly have communicated with each other through the 'pointed arch' formed by the intersection of the two. Later the opening was blocked up with haphazard masonry.

The above details document three important aspects of these buildings:

- (i) The similarity and interdependence of their design and construction;
- (ii) the Roman character of this construction;
- (iii) the elements of construction and design held in common by these two buildings and the Anastasian church.

To the third of these should be added the observation that the height of the octagon is the same as that of the vault of the Anastasian church, while the length of the chamber to the west is nearly the same as the length of the nave of that church. Moreover, the octagon opens onto the same courtyard as the church, and if it is not aligned with the church exactly, this may be explained, either by the pre-existence of buildings beside it, or by the alignment of the burial vaults, which about on an unexplored area, where there may have been another vaulted chamber parallel to the 'kitchens'.

The hypothesis that the octagon and the 'kitchens' were built in the early sixth century as part of the same Anastasian benefaction can be supported by a historical argument: after the death of Anastasius, the monastery of Qartmin, like most of the anti-Chalcedonian monasteries, entered a period of insecurity and economic depression during which the opponents of Chalcedon are unlikely to have been able to build with such confidence, still less to have had the opportunity of importing Byzantine architects and builders. The kind offices of Justinian's queen Theodora towards the Monophysites barely extended beyond the Constantinopolitan suburbs. Contrary to a

¹⁵⁵ cf. M. Mundell Mango, *CA* 30 (1982), pp. 52-3.

common belief first launched by Socin, no record exists of any contact between Theodora and our monastery.¹⁵⁶ It is true that the octagon under discussion is called today *qubba d-Theodora*, 'Theodora's dome', and that the Syrians themselves generally suppose this to refer to the great Theodora. But in fact this appellation goes back to the story in section 16 of the *Life of Samuel*, a legend according to which a letter from Samuel exorcized the possessed daughter of the emperor Arcadius, whose name was Theodora. Roman prosopography knows of no such person, though Arcadius may have had a son called Theodore, whose name can be spelt identically in Syriac. It is the developed retelling of the *Life of Samuel* in the *Berlin Paraphrase* of 1710 which invents a grateful benefaction as a result of this exorcism, whereby Theodora funded the building of the great dome at Qartmin.¹⁵⁷

Nor is there any good ground for the belief that Qartmin is identical with the 'Banasyneon' reformed by Justinian according to Procopius. The identification, suggested by Dilemann and generally accepted since, is based on the theory that the Greek 'to Banasyneon'¹⁵⁸ is a corruption of the Syriac 'iūdānā sēm'in', meaning 'the blessed Simeon'.¹⁵⁹ This is probably right, and no doubt the place concerned was named after a holy man called Simeon. But to assume that this was Qartmin is to ignore two important facts: (1) that Simeon was a common name and holy men frequent in the region of Tur 'Abdin; and (2) that the place where Justinian built is listed by Procopius as a fortress, not as a monastery.¹⁶⁰ There are no traces of military fortifications among the ruins around Qartmin.

Hönigmann thought that one of the three bishoprics under the metropolitan see of Dara in the Chalcedonian *Notitia Antiochena* of 570 was to be emended to read Banasyneon.¹⁶¹ But in that case Banasyneon cannot possibly be Qartmin, because Qartmin is attested as violently anti-Chalcedonian in 567, and because we know that Daniel (614-33) was the first bishop to reside at Qartmin.¹⁶² Conversely, it is quite probable that a Justinianic fortress was the seat of a Chalcedonian bishop in 570. Since there was at the same time a bishop of Tur 'Abdin, Banasyneon was probably somewhere else in the diocese of Dara; there is no lack of eligible fortresses.¹⁶³

The very paucity of sources for the history of Qartmin in the period after Anastasius and before the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia is perhaps an indication of hard times. The opponents of Chalcedon formed an 'underground church', sheltering their precious bishops in remote monasteries and struggling to survive. An enigmatic inscription of the year 534 at Qartmin apparently refers to the 'flight' or 'escape' of certain (monastic?) clergy.¹⁶⁴ Had the last figure of the date been erased it would almost certainly have been confidently restored as 531[7] and the 'flight' of the monks(?) would

¹⁵⁶ Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 235: 'Theodora von Byzanz (die Gemahlin Justinian's, eine Schutzpatronin der Monophysiten) kam hierher(?) und brachte dem Kloster sehr reiche Geschenke', whence Dilemann, *Mesopotamien*, p. 229; Hawkins/Mundell, 'Mosaics', p. 280; Halilux, *Philoxène de Mabhog* (1963), p. 105; *id.*, in *Eli de Qartamin* II, p. viii; Leroy, *CA* 25 (1976), p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ Fol. 107a-b (deriving from the Garchani version seen by Socin).

¹⁵⁸ Procopius, *Buildings*, II.4.14.

¹⁵⁹ Dilemann, *Mesopotamien*, p. 229; cf. Hönigmann, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), p. 84.

¹⁶⁰ *loc. cit.* *provision*; cf. *Notit. Dign.*, p. 75: 'Banasyneon Castellum'. Banasyneon is not listed among the monasteries restored in Mesopotamia by Justinian (Procopius, *Buildings*, V, 9.31-3).

¹⁶¹ Hönigmann, *loc. cit.* ¹⁶² *Chr. Edessa* 1234, II, p. 247; *Book of Life*, p. 6. ¹⁶³ See p. 22-3.

¹⁶⁴ *INSCR.* A.1.

have been brought into relation with the 'descent to the East' of the ruthless military patriarch Ephrem in the winter of 536/7, during which he drove many opponents of Chalcedon out of their monasteries and made a determined effort, in accordance with the policy of the emperor Justinian, to stamp out this divisive tendency in Mesopotamia. As it is, the inscription falls within the first ten years of Justinian's reign, during which there was supposedly a 'moratorium' on persecution.¹⁶⁵

The *Qartmin Trilogy* refers to the descent of Ephrem:

He sent to the abbey to persuade the monks with forceful arguments that they should throw in their lot with his party, but they paid no attention to his request. So he sent an armed force against them, while he himself took up residence in the church at Nisibis, and he pursued and scattered them to many regions... Some went to the massif of Corduene, or to the mountainous regions of the interior to the north, others to the desert of 'Arab or to the province of Singara, or else to Mt Izala and other places, to escape the violence of the persecution. There they built monasteries and abbeys. But they returned to this holy abbey... after an interval of twenty years, to find it breached and its buildings ruined. But the temple [i.e. the Anastasian church] had suffered no harm... The monks rebuilt the ruins and shored up the damaged buildings. But they were the victims twice more of intolerant assaults and were scattered for a total of ten years... Thus homecoming took turns with exile until the end of the life of King Justinian.

(Section 4 of the *Life of Gabriel*)

Unhappily, this is a piece of deception on the part of our writer. He has taken most of the above from John of Ephesus, playing havoc in the process with the chronology of the persecutions.¹⁶⁶ Ephrem's 'residence in the church at Nisibis' certainly never occurred; our author has introduced it into his quotation from John, forgetting that Nisibis was at that time in Persian possession. He has also varied the list of mountainous ranges. A passage in the *Chronicle of 569* names 'the monasteries of 'Arab and of Mesopotamia, of Izala and of Beth Gawgal' among those which suffered in the earlier persecution¹⁶⁷ and it seems probable that these included Qartmin.¹⁶⁸ But during Ephrem's descent Tur 'Abdin is as likely to have been a place of refuge for the obstinate believers as it is to have suffered itself. Even before that, life was uncomfortable for opponents of the council in the cities and on the plains of Mesopotamia, because all their leaders had been replaced by Chalcedonians. The new bishops did their best to force the population into submission. Those who resisted had, according to the *Life of John of Tella* (a reliable contemporary memoir), to take refuge 'in mountains and in tombs and in caves and in "the chinks of the earth"'.¹⁶⁹ The inscription of 534 at Qartmin may have recorded the flight of certain priests to the monastery, rather than from it.

There was no real relief for the Monophysites under the successors of Anastasius and certainly it would be rash to suppose that in the intervals between the most violent bouts of armed repression the churches and monasteries of the insubordinate entered into

¹⁶⁵ *Chr. Amida 569*, viii.5, p. 82; *LL. Eastern Saints*, Ch. 35 (with Brooks, Introduction, p. iv n. 8); *Chr. Michael 1195*, ix.15b, p. 270; A. van Roey, in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon II* (1953), pp. 351-4. ¹⁶⁶ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [419-20]. ¹⁶⁷ *Chr. Amida 569*, viii.5, pp. 80-1.

¹⁶⁸ *Lett. Philox. G.I*, p. 147, confirms that the monastery of Beth Gawgal had already been persecuted under the predecessors of the emperor Zeno; *Lett. Philox. G.II*, section 1, addresses 'the glorious abbeys and holy communities... that are on the mountain of Beth Gawgal', which in all probability includes Qartmin (see p. 116). ¹⁶⁹ *L. John of Tella*, p. 57.

their old relationship with the government. They were certainly determined to rebuild their monasteries and would do so any number of times.¹⁷⁰ But they worked with their own hands, rather than commissioning architects and builders trained in the capital. The octagon of Qartmin cannot be dated in this period, nor can it belong to the time of the last Persian wars. After those came the Arab conquest, under which Tur 'Abdin recovered sufficiently to begin expanding once more. The spate of buildings begins in the late seventh and continues throughout the eighth century (see Table 2, p. 194-5). But the octagon cannot have been constructed in this period, either. Already in 777, when the stone kneading-trough was placed there (see p. 214), the original purpose for which it was built had been forgotten.

What was that purpose? The similarity in structure between this building and the two free-standing mausolea at the western end of the monastic complex might mean that the great domed octagon was also associated with burial (fig. 2). But its great size and the absence of any trace of tombs under the arches rule out the possibility that it was just another mausoleum. Its proximity and similarity in scale to the conventual church is another clue: its original function was perhaps associated with the liturgy. The symbolism of the baptismal rite is that of death and resurrection. As St Paul expressed it: 'Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.'¹⁷¹ It is well known also that the number eight was associated by the Fathers of the Church with the same symbolism.¹⁷² In the words of St Ambrose: 'The number eight contains the fullness of Resurrection.'¹⁷³ The octagon was therefore the ideal structure for a Christian tomb; it was equally well-suited for a baptistery.¹⁷⁴ It was no accident that the octagon at Qartmin Abbey was built on the same plan as the mausolea; the monks of Qartmin were well aware of the symbolism of eight.¹⁷⁵ For what other reason did they delay the burial of an abbot or a bishop until the eighth day?¹⁷⁶ On an analogous principle, though more practically (considering the climate), the burial of church dignitaries in Mesopotamia commonly took place on the third day.¹⁷⁷ We need hesitate no further in claiming that the great octagon at Qartmin was built as a baptistery and that the vaulted hall which was constructed at the same time beside it was intended for the preparatory rituals of baptism.¹⁷⁸ Further confirmation is found in the existence of a cistern underneath the octagon, first signalled by Leroy, who came to the same conclusion about the octagon on the basis of its similarity with other baptisteries.¹⁷⁹ The monastery of St Simeon the Stylite near Antioch contains an octagonal baptistery in which the font is preserved; the latter consists of a pit with steps leading down on one side and up on the other.¹⁸⁰ Probably pilgrims came especially to be initiated at these holy monasteries.¹⁸¹ At the Saffron Monastery near Mardin there

¹⁷⁰ *LL. Eastern Saints*, pp. [106-8], [220]. ¹⁷¹ Romans 6:4.

¹⁷² Dölger, *Symbolik* (1934), pp. 153-87; 'Das Oktogon und die Symbolik der Achttzahl'.

¹⁷³ Ambrose, *expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, vii.173 (p. 359).

¹⁷⁴ M.M. Roberti, *Arte Lombarda* 8 (1963), pp. 77-98; esp. pp. 94-5.

¹⁷⁵ The superscription of the eighth book of Michael's *Chronicle* (p. 163) shows that the memory of this symbolism persisted with the Syrians into the twelfth century: 'on the eighth day he comes to renew everything'. ¹⁷⁶ xxxii.10; li.6-9; lxxxviii.8. ¹⁷⁷ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 59a.2; cf. xxxix.6.

¹⁷⁸ As suggested by J. Leroy, *CA* 25 (1976), p. 4. ¹⁷⁹ J. Leroy, *CA* 25 (1976), p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord*, i, pp. 237-8 with ii, pl. LXXXV.

¹⁸¹ That would explain why the font at the monastery of St Simeon was designed for mass-baptism. The monastery of Mor Abraham and Mor Abel near Midyat also has a baptistery (see n. 3 above).

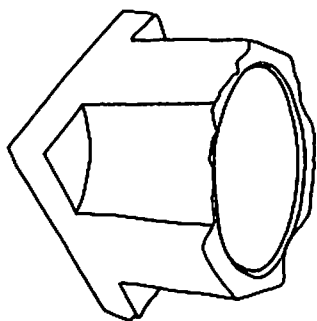


Fig. 47. Stone-carved octagonal font in the church of the Mother of God, Saffron Monastery, near Mardin

is an ancient baptismal font in the church of St Mary, cut out of a single block of stone in the shape of an octagon (fig. 47).

Once it is established that the dome at Qartmin is a baptistery, the open eye at its apex takes on a symbolic meaning: through baptism the eye of mankind is opened to the light which streams into our darkened world from above, the intellect is trained on the stars, the soul is washed clean by water from the sky. It sloughs off the darkness of sin through 'burial with Christ', in order to climb up the ladder of light through the dome of the firmament into heaven above. To the modern observer another comparison suggests itself: the *oculus* is the lens of a giant *camera oscura*, through which the image of God is imprinted on His new creation.

5

Mother of bishops: Qartmin Abbey in the annals of the church

1. Romans, Persians, Arabs

Dara had been elevated by its founder to the rank of a provincial metropolis with a metropolitan bishop whose jurisdiction covered Tur 'Abdin.¹ As long as Anastasius lived this bishop was a Monophysite, but, after the banishment of Thomas in 519, the first bishop of whom we hear is Mamas, whom John of Tella, in 537, accused of being a turncoat.² From 537 until 573, when Dara was taken by the Persians, Tur 'Abdin lay under a jurisdiction to which the monks of Qartmin were implacably hostile. It is probable that Qartmin was not isolated in its resistance. The townspeople of the 'cathedral village' of Hap and the villagers around are likely to have accepted, even against their will, the jurisdiction and the sacerdotal office of the Chalcedonian bishop. But monasteries were not so easy to subdue. They could be deprived of their land and even of their buildings, but what penalty could be inflicted on them that they might not welcome as an affirmation of their status as exiles from the world?³ Taken literally, the designation of the Monophysite abbot Daniel (author of a commentary on the psalms dated 541/2) as a 'native of Salab' refers to his village of origin; but monks were in the first place sons of their monastery and dead to their family, so the Syriac adjective may refer to this second home. If he was abbot of the monastery of Mor Jacob of Salab,

¹ The name 'Anastasioupolis' suggests that it was Anastasius who made Dara not only an episcopal see (cf. *Chr. Anida* 569, vii.6, p. 38), but also an ecclesiastical metropolis. Honigsmann (*Evagrus*, p. 104) states that this elevation occurred after 514 and (*Traditio* 5 (1947), p. 153) in any case before 533; his investigation of the date of Zakay, an illegitimate bishop who was deposed by the bishop of Dara, leads to the further conclusion that Dara already had metropolitan authority in the lifetime of Severus of Antioch, i.e. before 537 (*Evagrus*, pp. 104-7). Honigsmann thinks it 'evident' that the three suffragans of Dara named in the *Notitia Antiochena* post-dated Dara's elevation, but there seems to be no good reason for dismissing their previous existence *a priori* and the evidence for a fifth-century bishop of Tur 'Abdin is respectable (see p. 78).

² *L. John of Tella*, p. 74; John compares his like to the polyd, which knows how to change its colour for purposes of hunting food. Mamas is mentioned in the same year by Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, p. 105, and by Procopius, *Wars*, 1.36.8.

³ John of Tella was glad to avoid the moral dangers surrounding a bishop in his palace and to be forced to return to the life of an ascetic in the mountains; cf. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites* (1923), p. 68: 'exile is nothing to a man who is nothing but a stranger and a pilgrim anywhere . . . He is a government problem with no solution'.

traditionally founded before 421, he might have provided Qartmin with a monastic ally.⁴

As late as 567 Justin II, at the request of the Monophysites in the capital, sought to reconcile the monks of Mesopotamia to the imperial religion by sending the Patrikios John to call a council at Kallinikos.⁵ Present among other abbots was John of Qartmin:⁶ the monks of his abbey were chiefly responsible for the failure of this attempt at reconciliation.⁷

There can be little doubt that this John is the man who was made a bishop by Jacob Baradaeus for the see of Dara, an ordination which occurred after John of Ephesus wrote his *Life of Jacob* in 566.⁸ This did not mean that he supplanted the Chalcedonian bishop, but that his title, to which no temporal power was officially attached, stood as a challenge to the legitimacy of the official bishop. He may have continued to reside at Qartmin, for many bishops of the alternative hierarchy resided in their monasteries at this time, a practice which continued in many places after the need for it was gone and which was to make the concept of a bishop, whose 'diocese' was the monastery where he resided, an acceptable one in the Syrian Orthodox church.⁹ For this reason, the Persian capture of Dara in 573 need not have deprived John of his titular diocese, only of his rival in that diocese. Honigmann's hypothesis that John moved to the see of Amida after the fall of Dara is therefore unnecessary; nor can it have happened just like that, unless the previous metropolitan of Amida conveniently died at the right time.¹⁰ Honigmann had recourse to such a theory only because the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, in retelling from John of Ephesus the story of the death of a former abbot of Qartmin, identifies him as John, bishop of Amida.¹¹ It seemed, therefore, to Honigmann, that our John must have occupied the sees of Dara and of Amida successively. That there was a bishop John of Amida about this time need not be doubted, although a certain scepticism as to the accuracy of his *floruit* in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* is justifiable.¹² But the chronicler is likely to have confused him with the bishop of Dara.

John of Ephesus, in his account of the death of Jacob Baradaeus at the end of July 578 in Egypt, tells us that one of his companions, a bishop who had been abbot of Qartmin, died three days before him.¹³ This is the authoritative report, on which those

⁴ Daniel was abbot and priest in an unnamed monastery and, later, bishop of Tella: G. Diettrich, *Eine jakobitische Einleitung in den Psalter* (1910), pp. xvi–xvii, xxi n. 1; Rahmani, *Studia Syriaca*, 1, p. 27: (letter from John, abbot of the monastery of Eusebius to Daniel Šalhooyo . . . Mor Daniel abbot and priest); Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 179. Barsawm, *KBB*, pp. 332–3, attaches Daniel to Šalhiya, near Abu Kemal, though without any proof.

⁵ *Chr. Edessa* 1234, II, pp. 236–7; *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.2b, pp. 333–5.

⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.2b, p. 334: 'When John Patrikios arrived, he gathered Palladius, the abbot of Mor Bassus, and Antiochus of Arabia and John of Qartmin and other prominent men and clerics.'

⁷ *Chr. Edessa* 1234, II, p. 247.

⁸ L. Jacob Baradaeus II, p. [588] with n. 5; cf. Honigmann, *Evêques*, p. 239.

⁹ A particularly striking case is that of Severus of Samosata (d. 640): he spent the six winter months at his monastery, Qenneshrin, and the other six months of the year he devoted to visiting his diocese (*Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.7c, p. 418). Apart from the bishop (later, bishops) of Mor Matthew above Mossul, the earliest case of a bishop whose diocese was his monastery is that of Gabriel in the 750s (see p. 173) at Qartmin.

¹⁰ Honigmann, *Evêques*, p. 240.

¹¹ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 145.

¹² c.550/1 is the date given at *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 127 ('John the bishop of Amida from the monastery of Qartmin'); this chronicler is notoriously weak on chronology, and weakest of all are his *floruits*.

¹³ *Chr. John Eph.* 585, iv.33; reproduced in L. Jacob Baradaeus II, p. [613].

of later chronicles are based. That of Zuqnin, as we have seen, identified the bishop wrongly as John of Amida. Michael called him 'John, bishop of the abbey of Qartmin, by whose agency the schism at Edessa over the term *oûσία* was healed.'¹⁴ In spite of the credibility of such a circumstantial statement, this cannot be accepted in 1010. John of Ephesus would not have said 'a bishop who *had been* abbot of Qartmin' if that bishop was consecrated for the abbey. Besides, Qartmin was certainly not a 'diocese' in its own right at that date.¹⁵ Probably this is a scribal error; what Michael originally wrote was 'John the bishop, *from* the abbey of Qartmin'.¹⁶ We know that John of Dara was from that abbey; it was he that accompanied Jacob to Egypt and died there in 578.

That he intervened successfully in a dispute at Edessa is an interesting fact, though we do not know its original source. The history of the quarrel is told by Michael in Book x, Chapter 3 of his *Chronicle*; it does not concern us here, but no doubt Michael's source for that chapter also supplied the detail about John. He was therefore a man whose political activities extended beyond his diocese; he travelled around with Jacob Baradaeus, like an apostle, to 'edify the churches'. He is almost certainly one of the three Johns whose name is often appended, with that of Jacob, to the Monophysite encyclicals preserved in Add. MS 14,602 of the British Library, the other two being otherwise accounted for.¹⁷

The prominence of this former abbot of Qartmin in the politics of the Syrian Orthodox church in its formative years may well have contributed to the ecclesiastical standing of his abbey. The fierce resistance to reconciliation with Constantinople shown by the monks of Qartmin in 567 was enough to make them heroes when their church as a whole came round to their point of view. The recent past may thus have helped to determine the way the church regrouped after the total conquest of Mesopotamia by the Persians in 613. For the abbey then emerged as an important centre of jurisdiction in the church.

As long as it had belonged to the Romans, Tur 'Abdin had been liable to punitive raids from beyond the frontier on which it lay.¹⁸ In 581 the raiders sacked Qartmin;¹⁹ with them vanished the last of the precious objects which had borne witness to the golden age of Anastasius.²⁰ No doubt the archives of the monastery were damaged; this may be when the record of the building of the octagonal baptistery perished.²¹ Yet Tur 'Abdin remained an outpost of Roman military force for another quarter of a century. Not until 604/5 was the castle on its south-eastern escarpment taken by the Persians.²² In these years of political and military uncertainty the fortunes of the Syrian Orthodox church at a local level are unknown. Cyriac, whom anti-Chalcedonians recognized as bishop of Amida, was the most important man on the Tigris frontier, as far as our

¹⁴ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.15c, p. 365.

¹⁵ See p. 153.

¹⁶ The omission of the word *men* from the phrase *d-men qartmin* might well have seemed innocuous enough to a scribe, or even a sensible emendation, since it is odd that the bishop's see is not mentioned.

¹⁷ *Doc. Monoph.*, pp. 145, 189, 195, 196, 204 and 209; H.G. Kleyne, *Jacob Baradaeus* (1882), p. 180 and p. 190, calls the first two the bishops of Qenneshrin and of Epiropolis/Seleucia; the last he calls 'the bishop of Sura or of Dara' (p. 180) and, later, 'bishop of Sura or of Amida' (p. 190), presumably because he supposed that John of Dara later became John of Amida.

¹⁸ These are a *Leitmotiv* of the *Qartmin Trilogy*; to judge by the route taken by the army of Assurnasirpal II in 879 BC (see the Introduction), the abbey of Qartmin lay on the path of an invader.

¹⁹ *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 891; date corrected by Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 194 n. 7.

²⁰ v.18–20, supported by common sense.

²¹ cf. Ch. 4, *ad fin.*

²² *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 916.

communities were concerned.²³ He was to play a vital role in the policy of the patriarch Athanasius I 'the Camel-driver' to re-establish the unity of the Eastern and Western branches of his church under his own primacy, after the Persian conquest of 613 had removed the international boundary between them.

There is no evidence that Syrian Orthodox ever endeared themselves to the enemy by acts of positive disloyalty to their rulers.²⁴ Theophylact Simocatta even represents the inhabitants of Tur 'Abdin as unusually active supporters of the Romans in the Twenty Years' War with Persia (572–91).²⁵ But the Persian conquest brought incidental benefits for them. Khusro II (590–628), influenced through his Christian wife, Shirin, drove out the Chalcedonian bishops of Mesopotamia and Syria from their sees, no doubt because they were identified with the imperial church, and supplied replacements for them from among the Christians of his own empire.²⁶ At first, recognizing the Nestorians as the most un-Roman type of Persian Christians, the shah sent one of them to Edessa, the prime see of Osroene and, in a sense, of Mesopotamia. But the experiment was a failure; Khusro realized that the Monophysite population must be governed by bishops of their own confession. Among these, he gave preference to the Syrian Orthodox of the region of Mossul, again for political reasons, as the persicized branch of their church. Some dioceses, however, protested that these bishops had not been ordained by their patriarch but by the metropolitan of Mossul, who thus seemed to be extending his jurisdiction beyond its historically determined boundaries. The patriarch, with the help of Cyriac of Amida, whom he made Visitor General of the East, including the region of Mossul, had some success in re-establishing the formalities of the traditional order and made an attempt to draw Mossul into the common fold, while respecting in some degree the autonomy to which political conditions had accustomed it. Yet a certain rivalry between East and West would remain the central preoccupation of the Syrian Orthodox church for the rest of its history; in the two centuries following the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia it was a running sore.

To judge by the role of Qartmin in this conflict, it had early fallen under the influence of the eastern community. Some speculation is inevitable if we seek to know when this happened and how. Probably the roots of the relationship go back to the sixth century, although even earlier there were the missionary-monks and bishops of Tur 'Abdin who were active, occasionally to the point of martyrdom, in Persian territory (xxiii.6). In the fifth century, however, the Nestorianization of Persia presented a threat against which the main defence of the communities which were later to become the Syrian Orthodox of Persia was solidarity with their fellow believers in the West; nor had the alienation of Mesopotamian Christianity from the imperial church yet reached a serious level. What had already occurred in the fifth century was the flight of non-Nestorian Christians in Persia to the monasteries, where thenceforth their centre of gravity lay. A similar historical crisis in the sixth century formed the monastic character of the Syrian

Orthodox church in Roman territory. It was the monks who carried the banner of anti-Chalcedonianism and, when it came to the deposition of their official bishops in the cities, they continued to harbour a rival hierarchy in their cloisters. With the thorough campaigns of the early sixth-century Chalcedonian patriarchs of Antioch to suppress this monastic resistance, many monks and some bishops took refuge beyond the boundaries of the empire. It was in Mt Singara that John of Tella was apprehended, to be extradited for a bribe by the Persian frontier-general of Nisibis.²⁷ When we encounter, in the early eighth century, a dependency of the monastic community of Qartmin in Mt Singara, we must regard the sixth-century persecutions as the most likely occasion for its founding.²⁸

Long before 613, the monks of Tur 'Abdin had formed strong ties with their fellows across the frontier. For many decades, they lived under the jurisdiction of the Chalcedonian bishop of Dara, a state of affairs which can only have reinforced the feeling that they were no longer really at home in the Roman empire. Already they looked beyond it for support. When, therefore, in 614/15, Mor Daniel 'Uzoyo, who had ruled Qartmin as abbot, was elevated to the dignity of metropolitan and set over Tella, Mardin, Dara and Tur 'Abdin,²⁹ we may see more than a chance parallel between this appointment and the position of the bishop of Mor Matthew, a Syrian Orthodox monastery above Mossul. The agreement of the patriarch Athanasius in 629 set the seal of legitimacy on an order already existing: the monastery of Mor Matthew received the primacy over the monasteries of Persia, its abbot was given the rank of *chorepiskopos* and the title 'head of the abbots', the bishop-resident became metropolitan of the bishops of Assyria.³⁰ We know that Mossul (by which we should understand 'Mor Matthew') had the leading part in filling the eastern bishoprics of the former Roman territories immediately after 613.³¹ It seems certain that Daniel, 'abbot and first bishop in the holy abbey of Qartmin',³² was appointed by the metropolitan of Mossul, and that Mor Matthew provided the precedent for the situation of metropolitan authority in a monastery. It follows that Mossul sought in this way to extend its power westwards, by shifting both the episcopal see of Tur 'Abdin (previously in Hah) and the throne of the metropolitan to a monastic community which already felt itself bound by many ties to the East. That there may have been some opposition to Daniel's anomalous metropolitan title is suggested by the fact that Cyriac of Amida, writing early in the seventh century in the monastery of Psiltho near Tella,³³ lists the bishops appointed by Khusro as Samuel of

²⁷ *L. John of Tella*, pp. 66–74, esp. pp. 71–2: to the Persian general's question: 'How has such a man as yourself [sc. a bishop] dared to enter our territory without our knowledge? Do you not know this is another state [politēia]?' John replied, in Greek: 'This is not the first but the third time I have come [...] These days there is such peace between the kingdoms that I hardly consider them two different countries.'

²⁸ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 235 (Dolabani, p. 148); summary, p. 178.

²⁹ *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 926.

³⁰ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.4b, p. 412.

³¹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.25c, p. 390.

³² *Book of Life*, p. 6; cf. xxii.11–12. Daniel may have been an easterner himself, cf. Introduction, n. 55.

³³ Kugener (in *Bibliothèque Hagiographique Orientale* iii (1902) 2), followed by Brooks, *PO* 17.1 (1923), pp. xiii–xiv, disputes Cyriac's authorship of the appendix to *L. Jacob Baradaeus* ii. His grounds are insufficient: the colophon does not prove that Theodosius the Stylite of Psiltho composed the text in 741, since *ethkthev ba-hfh(i)utho* rather suggests the mere copying (by a third party) of what had already been written (*ettakhtav*, *ettsim*); thus, we read in the colophon to *L. Barjawmo* in Br. Lib. Add. MS 14,734, fol. 174a (see Wright, *MSS London*, p. 1148): 'It was copied at the instance [*ethkathbath b-yasifutho*] of the priest Theodore.' Moreover, Theodosius expressly attributes it to Cyriac and, while that does not rule out the

²³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.25c, pp. 390–1.

²⁴ A.H.M. Jones, *JTS* NS 10.2 (1959), p. 292.

²⁵ Theophylact ii.1.1–2; 3.9; 18.7; Whitby, 'Theophylact', p. 147: 'T. praises the courage and loyalty of the inhabitants of Tur Abdin, the people of Mardin prayed all day for Roman victory at Solachon, and country dwellers near Fafi tried to betray the Persian garrison occupying their town.' If I am right to date the martyrdom of Karpos to this war or its near sequel (p. 23f.), it might support this.

²⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, x.25c, pp. 389–90; *L. Jacob Baradaeus* ii (Appendix), p. [615].

Amida, Isaiiah of Edessa, Addai of Rish'ayno and Zakay of Tella, adding only: 'and so in every district and city'.³⁴

It is significant that Daniel is commemorated in the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin* as 'bishop of Qartmin'.³⁵ This was certainly not his official designation, but it corresponded well with the reality. The date of his commemoration, 9 December, must be that of his death in 633, for 9 December in 614 was not a Sunday and so cannot have been the date of his episcopal ordination. The *Chronicle of 819* tells us that 'In the year 945 [AD 633/4] Mor Daniel 'Uzoyo died and was succeeded as bishop and as abbot of Qartmin by Mor Gabriel of Beth Qusian'. Later, it calls Gabriel 'bishop of Dara and abbot of Qartmin',³⁶ which seems to point to an official desire to retain at least the formality of Dara's status as the metropolitan see. This may have been the result of patriarchal efforts to restore the *status quo ante* after the disturbing advances of the jurisdiction of Mossul. That the patriarch may have gone further in unbuilding the edifice of eastern influence in his traditional sphere may be indicated by the presence of a bishop of Dara at Gabriel's funeral (LXXXVII.17-18); that means, if the records are reliable, that after 644, when he is called bishop of Dara, Gabriel must at some point have given up that title together with the personal administration of the diocese of Dara.

That he continued, however, to enjoy metropolitan authority equivalent to that of his predecessor, Daniel, is implied in the record of his funeral, where his diocese is described as extending 'from the Tigris to the Harbo', a river which flowed past Tella.³⁷ His official title at the time of his death was probably 'bishop of Tur 'Abdin',³⁸ yet his greater dignity may be inferred from the presence of ten bishops at his funeral. They are listed in geographical order, their dioceses forming a circle drawn clockwise around Tur 'Abdin:

Iwanis of Amida, Ignatius of Mayperqat, Gregory of Arzon, Basil of Jazira, Polycarp of the region of Beth 'Araboye, Dioscorus of Singara-and-Haburo, Epiphanius of Nisibis, Sisinnius of Dara, John of Kfarutho, Jacob of Sawro. (LXXXVII.14-18)

The list raises questions. That concerning the see of Sawro was discussed in Chapter 1, where the result was in favour of the correctness of our list. Another concerns Jazira. Jazira is usually said to have been founded by al-Hasan ibn 'Umar in the ninth century.³⁹ But, it is clear, this was a refoundation of the ancient city of Bezabde/Beth Zabday, the conquest of which is attributed by Baladhuri to the Arab general 'Iyad ibn Ghannam in the year 640.⁴⁰ 'Jazira' may have been substituted by a later scribe for the

possibility that Cyria also 'up-dated' John of Ephesus' *Life of Jacob*, it cannot be attached to that revision as opposed to the appendix; Cyria's authorship of the appendix makes it necessary to explain the reference to Heraclius' reconquest of Mesopotamia (a short, unconnected sentence on pp. 161-5-16) as an interpolation, or else to doubt the date given by the notoriously imprecise *Chr. Zaganin* 775, p. 150 (AD 934 = AD 622/3) for Cyria's death.

³⁴ *L. Jacob Baradaeus II* (Appendix), p. 16151. ³⁵ *Cal. T.4*, 9 Dec.

³⁶ *Chr. Qartmin* 819, p. 11.

³⁷ LXXXVII.10-11; cf. *L. Jacob Baradaeus II*, p. 16811.

³⁸ In the title of the *Life*, he is called 'bishop of the abbey... of Qartmin' (CV.1-2); we have seen that this title was given to Daniel in the *Calendar* and it is given later in the century to Bishop Elijah of Tur 'Abdin (see

p. 168). LXXXVII.11 falsely equates the area between the Tigris and Tella with Tur 'Abdin, but that seems to be because of the uncertainty about Gabriel's title; the words 'all this region of Tur 'Abdin' were inserted later by someone who did not know where the river Harbo was and assumed that 'the whole diocese' (LXXXVII.9) meant Tur 'Abdin, with its '23 villages' (LXXXVII.12).

⁴⁰ Baladhuri, p. 176 [ed. Munajjid, I, p. 208].

then antiquated 'Beth Zabday'.⁴¹ The fact that Kfarutho here eclipses Mardin, with which it was twinned, argues for an early date: in 640 Kfarutho is given the greater prominence by Baladhuri's account,⁴² whereas in the eighth century the bishop of Mardin and Kfarutho is referred to as 'bishop of Mardin', *tout court*.⁴³ Again, the name of Sisinnius is virtually unknown to the Syrians, and would not have occurred to a forger of the Arab period.⁴⁴ We know so little about the seventh century, and the early part of that century was such an unstable period for the Syrian Orthodox church, that we can hardly judge it by its historical context.⁴⁵

After Gabriel there is no further evidence that any bishop of Tur 'Abdin enjoyed metropolitan or quasi-metropolitan status. Indeed, the names of his successors are forgotten until that 'Ananias of the abbey of Qartmin', who, with Sergius Zkhunoyo and Gabriel of Rish'ayno was one of the leading bishops in opposition to the patriarch Severus bar Mashqe (667-80), was a bishop of Tur 'Abdin (and also, presumably, a metropolitan, since the dispute concerned the ancient rights of metropolitans)⁴⁶ but, in the list of signatories to the letters which brought about an end to the schism after Severus' death, the only Ananias is the metropolitan of Damascus.⁴⁷ The fact that a monk of Qartmin is found in such a high place (he was counted among the most respected seniors in the church⁴⁸) may be an indicator of the importance of the abbey at this time. The historian called him after his monastery, not after his see, because the chief agitators in the dispute were monks, and Ananias, though formally the representative of Damascus, was in fact the mouthpiece for a monastic party.⁴⁹

Gabriel himself is an elusive personality and facts about him are hard to come by, yet his fame as a saint had grown by the late eighth century to such proportions that his body was exhumed to ward off the plague.⁵⁰ His right hand was detached and taken to Hah for the same reason, perhaps also to the Monastery of the Cross near Hah, which, like Qartmin, suffered many losses in the plague.⁵¹ In the aftermath of these events, the legend of Gabriel grew. It was remembered that his disciple, Theodore, had related how

⁴¹ In later Syrian Orthodox tradition, the name of Beth Zabday became attached to Azakh (modern Idli), as attested by the silver cover of the Gospel-Book which is one of Helga Anshutz's subjects in *Oriks*. St. 31 (1982), pp. 326-33. ⁴² *Ibid.* cf. (n. 40).

⁴³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.22c, p. 465 ('Sarguno of Mardin', c.748) and often in the following pages; that the full title remained as before is shown *ibid.* xi.5b, p. 489; Register xvii.6, p. 753 ('Ananias of Mardin and Kfarutho', AD 793); cf. also *ibid.* Register x, p. 752.

⁴⁴ This is the only instance of the name in Syriac, except for historians' accounts of the archbishop Sisinnius of Constantinople.

⁴⁵ Honigsmann, *Barlaam*, p. 101 thus goes too far in dismissing this evidence; cf. p. 24.

⁴⁶ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 63b.1: 'Bishop Mor Elijah of the same monastery [Mor Simeon of Qartmin].

⁴⁷ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.13c, p. 436-7, cf. xi.23b, p. 469; *Chr. Edessa* 1224, ii, pp. 262-3. Those who have taken him for a bishop of Qartmin include M. Le Quien, *Orient Christianus*, ii (1740), p. 1484; Nau, *Actes XVe congr. orient.*, ii (1907), p. 32; Kriger, *Monachum* i, p. 48; Hage, *Jakobiische Kirche*, p. 106.

⁴⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.14b, pp. 438, 440; Honigsmann, *Barlaam*, p. 102.

⁴⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.13c, p. 436.

⁵⁰ Thus the monks are named first in several places in the letters (*Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.14, p. 438, inner column line 19, p. 439, inner column line 13; p. 441, outer column line 30), before the clergy and the lay people.

⁵¹ *Life of Gabriel*, sections 27 and 28.

⁵² *Cal. T.4*, 31 Aug.: *Life of Gabriel*, section 28 (xc.10) suppresses this fact, though relating how his right arm was cut off. For the losses suffered by Qartmin and the Monastery of the Cross, see *Chr. Zaganin* 775, p. 368 [Chabot, p. 186]; for the close link between the latter monastery and Hah, see Ch. I, n. 69.

Gabriel once resuscitated a boy whom his mother believed to be dead in a tiny village called Sighun.⁵³ The *Chronicle of 819* reports that he 'gave life to a corpse and performed many other miracles'.⁵⁴ As time went on, he was credited with two other resurrections:⁵⁵ one, at Olin, was clearly inspired by the name of the village, which means 'they are mourning'; the other, at the Monastery of the Cross, may preserve a memory of the coming of Gabriel's relic in the year of the plague. The dedication of a church to Mor Gabriel at Zaz,⁵⁶ near these two places, may be due to this development of the legend. By the thirteenth century it was normal to join his name to that of the Founders, Samuel and Simeon, as one of the three great saints of Qartmin;⁵⁷ later still, Gabriel was singled out as 'the chief of the chosen ones' and by the end of the fifteenth century Qartmin was simply known as 'Mor Gabriel', as it is still today.⁵⁸

It was the custom of calling the abbey after three patron saints which gave the impetus for the compilation of the *Qartmin Trilogy*.⁵⁹ But, while the building records which are incorporated in that text, along with the foundation legend and a brief *Life* of Simeon, were available to the compiler of the *Trilogy*, he found very little material for Gabriel's *Life* at hand. He knew that he was from Beth Qustan, north-east of Hah,⁶⁰ and he knew the stories of his three resurrection miracles; but large parts of his narrative are adapted from John of Ephesus and other sources to fill what was clearly a painful gap.⁶¹ The problem is, to decide what part of the residue to retain and how to use it.

We have already seen that the list of bishops present at Gabriel's funeral seems genuine and that the description of his jurisdiction as reaching from the Tigris to the Harbo corresponds with the metropolitan province for which Daniel had been ordained.⁶² The date of Gabriel's death and the summary of his career, which appear in the same passage of the *Life*, also have the circumstantial ring of a genuine record. He died on Tuesday 23 December, AG 979 (AD 667)⁶³ and:

The sum of the years of the life of Mor Gabriel was seventy-four.
At fifteen, he became disciple under the yoke of the monastic life.

⁵³ LXXIX.18–20, where the first person plural ('he told us') seems to echo an oral tradition; had the narrative been fictional, it would probably have made the mother of the boy a widow, in order to cast Gabriel as Elijah. (She actually does become a widow in Br. Lib. Add. MS 12.272 (of the thirteenth century) foll. 12a and 21b.) This section of the *Life of Gabriel* also contains interesting information about his visiting customs.

⁵⁴ Chr. *Qartmin* 819, AG 945.

⁵⁵ LXXVI.9–12; it is impossible to assess the truth-content of the writer's claim concerning the two 'eyewitnesses', Joshua the Sphenian and Jacob of Arzan.

⁵⁶ Weissner, *Kultbauten*, pp. 80–2, pls. 44–6.

⁵⁷ One example in a MS of 1015 (cf. Ch. 3, n. 2) is (Br. Lib.) Add. (MS) 12.165: 'the great abbey of M[or] Gab[riel] and of M[or] Sam[uel] and M[or] Sim[eon]', but this is a later marginal note (the script is of the mid-fourteenth century; cf. Add. 18.741, fol. 195b); (Berlin MS) Sachau 352 (thirteenth century?): 'the holy abbey of M. Sim. and M. Sam. and M. Gab., of Qartmin'; Add. 14.737 (1493): 'the same holy abbey which is the monastery of M. Sam. and M. Sim. and M. Gab.'; [Selly Oak MS] Mingana 400 (1585): 'Addai of Kfarbiya east of the monastery of Gab., Sim. and Sam' (emending 'Michael' in Mingana, *MSS Birmingham*, p. 713); Mingana 466 (1601): 'the abbey of M. Gab. and M. Sim. and M. Sam.'; Sachau 221 (1710): 'the monastery of M. Sam., M. Sim. and M. Gab.'

⁵⁸ Br. Lib. Orient. MS 1017 (of 1364): 'the holy abbey of Mor Samuel and Mor Simeon and that most exalted of all the chosen ones the victorious Mor Gabriel' and (in an obituary of the scribe, who died in the cave of Barsiqay below the abbey in 1394/5, one of many victims of the Mongol invasion): 'the monastery of Mor Samuel and Mor Simeon and that most exalted of chosen ones, Mor Gabriel'; Bodley No. 131 (of 1364): 'the abbey of Mor Gabriel'; Bodley No. 68 (1626/7): 'the bishop of Mor Gabriel'.

⁵⁹ II.13, 16–17. ⁶⁰ Cal. TA, 23

⁶¹ See p. 16f.

⁶² See p. 154.

⁶³ LXXXVII.19–20.

At twenty, he became a deacon.

At thirty-nine, he was made head of the brothers.

At forty-five, he became priest, or presbyter.

At sixty, he was ordained a bishop, and he sat on the episcopal throne for 14 years, 7 months and 23 days. (LXXXVIII.3–9)

That this record antedates the composition of the *Life* in its present form is clear from the disagreement with the fictional account of Gabriel's youth, where he is made a deacon in his village before becoming a monk.⁶⁴ Also, the later compiler misunderstood the term 'head of the brothers', used here in its old sense of 'head of the unpriested monks', and assumed it meant 'abbot'.⁶⁵ But, while the *curriculum vitae* seems credible, something must be wrong with the date: 23 December 667 was not a Tuesday, nor was 1 May 653 a Sunday, as required by the canons for the ordination of a bishop.⁶⁶ Moreover, the *Chronicle of 819* says that he became a bishop in 633/4. It is not enough to mend 979 to 959, though that can easily be explained as a scribal corruption;⁶⁷ that would put his ordination five months before the beginning of the year in which Daniel died,⁶⁸ and 1 May 633 was, in any case, not a Sunday. But if we assume the original writer made an error and put 959 instead of 960 – an assumption which is strengthened by the fact that certain dates in John of Ephesus and in the *Chronicle of 819* are a year too early⁶⁹ – then everything falls into place: 1 May 634 was a Sunday and 23 December 648 was a Tuesday. What is more, the plague described in an Appendix to the *Life*, which was so devastating it killed thirty monks in one night at Qartmin, occurred 'about 130 years' after Gabriel's death (xc1.4) and can thus be identified, thanks to the emended date of the latter, with the plague which raged in the black years of the two Mūsās, governors of Mesopotamia and of Syria c.770–5.⁷⁰ Denis, who must be Michael's authority here, describes no similar plague in the 790s. He agrees with the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* in saying the disease started in the head, whereas the Appendix to the *Life of Gabriel* says it attacked the throat: but the Zuqnin chronicler (an eyewitness) admits that it took many different forms.⁷¹ The same author tells us that it raged in Tur 'Abdin in the summer of 774, destroying 95 monks at Qartmin and all the prominent members of the community at the Monastery of the Cross.⁷² The gruesome and locally unprecedented exhumation of the corpse of Gabriel by the monks of Qartmin⁷³ thus finds a context which helps to explain it: Denis and the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* both describe the wave of grave-robbing (often very soon after burial, sometimes affecting ancient tombs of the pagans) which swept north-eastern Mesopotamia in c.773–4 as a consequence of over-taxation.⁷⁴

To return, therefore, to the record of Gabriel's funeral: we can accept it in all essentials, including the summary of his career, as genuine. He was born in 573/4; he became a monk in 588/9 and a deacon in 593/4, both at the earliest possible age; in

⁶⁴ LXIV.16; modelled on LL. *Eastern Saints*, p. 424: 'he also became a Son of the Covenant in his village'.

⁶⁵ See p. 94. ⁶⁶ L. *John of Tella*, p. 53.

⁶⁷ If the numbers were originally represented by letters, NUN (50) could be mistaken for 'E (70).

⁶⁸ Daniel probably died on 9 December 633; see p. 154. ⁶⁹ See p. xviii.

⁷⁰ Chr. *Zuqnin* 775, pp. 358f [Chabot, pp. 176–83].

⁷¹ Chr. *Michael* 1195, xi.26a, p. 477; Chr. *Zuqnin*, p. 359 [Chabot, p. 179].

⁷² Chr. *Zuqnin*, p. 368 [Chabot, p. 186]. ⁷³ *Life of Gabriel*, section 24.

⁷⁴ Chr. *Zuqnin* 775, pp. 264f, 320f [Chabot, pp. 147–78, 183–5]; Chr. *Michael* 1195, xi.26a, pp. 476–7.

612/13 he was elected head of the brothers and in 618/19 he was priested. He reigned as bishop from 1 May 634 to 23 December 648.

Gabriel was therefore 'metropolitan of Dara' during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634-44). Chronological considerations allow that he might have met that caliph as is stated in section 12 of the *Life* (LXXII.7f). It is almost certain that he would have been responsible for negotiating a treaty with the Arab conquerors in 639, by which the rights and obligations of his Christian community would have been laid down. However, the original account of this event has been overlaid in our text with later additions.

The course of the Arab conquest of Mesopotamia is described by several authorities. The first city to open its gates to the Muslims was Edessa.⁷⁵ There was no genuine resistance, in spite of the refusal of the *patricios* of Mesopotamia to pay the tribute promised by his predecessor, which was the *casus belli*.⁷⁶ The previous governor had been replaced because of this humiliating treaty and it was on the orders of Heraclius' nominee, Ptolemy, that the Edessenes shot at the Muslims for an hour before capitulating.⁷⁷ The Arab commander, 'Iyād ibn Ghannam, granted them the following terms:

The inhabitants receive security for their persons, their goods, their offspring, their spouses, their cities and their mills. They shall pay for each man one dinar and two *modii* of wheat. They shall maintain the bridges and roads, guide those who have strayed and keep themselves in good behaviour towards the Muslims. As witness, God, his angels and the Muslims.⁷⁸

That was in 639.⁷⁹ The other cities of Mesopotamia followed the example of Edessa, sending away their Roman garrisons crestfallen, except for Tella and Dara, which were taken by force with much Roman blood shed.⁸⁰ According to Khwarizmi, Kallinikos, Amida, Tella and Rish'ayno were 'opened' in 639.⁸¹ Baladhuri (dating all the conquests mistakenly to the following year) gives the series: Kallinikos, Circesium, Amida, Mayperqat, Kartutho, Nisibis, Tur 'Abdin, the castle of Mardin, Dara, Corduene, Beth Zabday.⁸² Khwarizmi placed the conquest of Nisibis, Tur 'Abdin and Corduene in 640.⁸³ Only the treaty obtained by Kallinikos is recorded besides that of Edessa; it contains the following provision: 'Their churches shall not be destroyed nor be used as dwellings, if they pay the tax which has been imposed on them, commit no murder and build no new church or temple, use no gong in public and make no processions.'⁸⁴

The conditions under which Amida was taken were like those of Kallinikos; Nisibis obtained a treaty similar to that of Edessa, likewise after a brief spell of shooting, but without serious resistance.⁸⁵ It is reasonable to assume that it was not otherwise for Tur 'Abdin,⁸⁶ the terms recorded in the *Life of Gabriel*, insofar as they contradict those of

⁷⁵ Baladhuri, p. 174. ⁷⁶ Agapius, 2.ii, pp. 476-7; *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.72, pp. 420-1.

⁷⁷ Baladhuri, *loc. cit.*, with Agapius, *loc. cit.* ⁷⁸ Baladhuri, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁹ This is the consensus of Agapius and Michael against Baladhuri, *loc. cit.*, and other sources confirm it (e.g. Khwarizmi).

⁸⁰ Agapius, *loc. cit.*; *Chr. Michael* 1195, *loc. cit.*

⁸¹ *Chr. Elijah* 1018, p. 133, AH 18.

⁸² Baladhuri, p. 173. ⁸³ Baladhuri, p. 176; see p. 167.

⁸⁴ Baladhuri, p. 173. ⁸⁵ Baladhuri, p. 176.

⁸⁶ The dubious [Ps.-]Wagdi, p. 123, states that the inhabitants of Tur 'Abdin received a document from Khalid (sic), confirming that the Muslims had accepted their surrender on condition that those who remained Christian should pay the poll-tax.

Kallinikos, are unlikely to be historical. But the principle that monks should be free of tribute is attested for this early period.⁸⁷ I leave it to the experts on taxation under Islam to decide about the significance of the phrase 'priests and deacons shall not give vertebrae' (LXXII.12); perhaps, on the analogy of the phrase 'tax on the neck', it means the poll-tax.⁸⁸ The personal connection with 'Umar is also suspect; he would hardly have been described as merely a 'governor' or 'prefect', since Syriac sources from the earliest times call the caliph 'king'. In the eighth and ninth centuries the 'Treaty of 'Umar' was at the centre of a heated debate about the rights of the Christian *dhimmi*s.⁸⁹ Our 'treaty' may have been 'developed' as a polemical counterpoise, to 'show' that 'Umar was not hostile to the liberties of *dhimmi*s.

Little else in the *Life of Gabriel* need be retained as historical. He was thought to have been very strict about community rules in the Refectory (sections 13 (LXXII.17f) and 14 (LXXII.16f)) and to have spent a part of his life in the abbey as a recluse (LXXII.10). These were probably genuine elements of the tradition. But the narrative is fictional or borrowed. Section 11 (LXXII.3f) looks historical, but the appearance is deceptive. The date given there for Gabriel's episcopal ordination is calculated, albeit incorrectly, from the corrupted date of Gabriel's death in section 22 with the help of the *curriculum vitae* in section 23; the 'synchronisms', which cannot be reconciled with one another, are a patchwork of reminiscences from the chronicles designed to evoke the circumstances of the early seventh century and to give this date the semblance of accuracy.⁹⁰ In the same way, the compiler of the *Trilogi* thought to make the foundation date of the abbey more imposing by adding a 'synchronism' with Cyril of Alexandria and Celestine of Rome (xx: 19-xxi.1), oblivious to the dissonance with the date and the emperors given and to the fact that the patriarch of Antioch and the local bishop would have been named by preference in a genuine record.

Gregory's brief summary of the *Qartmin Trilogi*⁹¹ was based on a hasty reading, during which sections 11 and 12 of the *Life of Gabriel* particularly caught his eye. But he misrepresented the treaty and clearly did not trouble to check the date. Gabriel was, for him, just a footnote to the foundation of Qartmin. He did not try to work him into his account of the seventh century.

2. Simeon of the Olives, founder of the prosperity of Qartmin

The late thirteenth-century copyist of the latter part of the London manuscript of the *Trilogi* drew his own conclusions from the corrupted date of Gabriel's death. He decided that the lifetime of Simeon of the Olives overlapped considerably with that of Gabriel, and that he should somehow make a connection between them. Conveniently, there existed a tradition that a young deacon of 'about twenty years of age' had his life crushed out of him by the crowd surging up to receive communion on the eighth day

⁸⁷ Futai, *Sinaia*, Ch. 7 on taxation, esp. pp. 270f. 'L' exonération de certaines catégories de *dhimmi*s'; cf. Tritton, *Non-Muslims*, Ch. 13.

⁸⁸ cf. Dennett, *Conversion*, pp. 27, 32: 'levied [tax] on their necks', 'removed *ḥṣya* from their necks'.

⁸⁹ See Tritton, *Non-Muslims*; Dennett, *Conversion*, pp. 62-3, concludes that the authentic kernel of the 'Covenant of 'Umar' is in Tabari, I, 2493-6.

⁹⁰ AD 965 = AD 633/4; Heraclius entered Edessa in 628; the patriarch Athanasius died in 631; 'Umar's caliphate is dated 634-44. ⁹¹ *Chr. Gregory II*, cols. 119, 121.

after Gabriel's death and was subsequently revived on the corpse of the saint (*Life of Gabriel*, section 24 (LXXXVIII.13f)). Now, Simeon became bishop of Harran in 700 (AG 1011, '32 years', as the interpolator says (LXXXIX.16-17), after the supposed date of the funeral, AG 979) and died in 734. He might well have been about twenty in 667, but it is unlikely that he was more than an infant in 648, if indeed he was already born. The scribe inserted a summary of his life with a couple of extracts from the *Chronicle of 846*,⁹² which had not been used by the previous redactor of the *Trilogy*, by the simple expedient of identifying Simeon with this young man. That this identification was made so late is shown by the thirteenth-century commemoration service of Gabriel in Br. Lib. MS Add. 17,272, where the story of the young deacon is told (fol. 56) without mention of Simeon.

The temptation to bring Simeon into direct relation with Gabriel (as Ignatius of Antioch, for instance, had been identified with the boy chosen by Christ as an example of humility in Chapter 18 of Matthew's Gospel⁹³), was made the stronger by Simeon's fame as a saint in his own right. He was certainly one of the most prominent men of his generation in the Syrian Orthodox church. Michael's *Chronicle* preserves the record of his presence with only four other Syrian bishops at the important synod of Mantzikert in 726, by which was cemented the paradoxical union of the Syrians with the Armenians.⁹⁴ The *Chronicle of 819* (followed with less detail by the *Chronicle of 846*) tells us that he was a monk of Qartmin; that he was made bishop of Harran in 699/700; that he used funds from the treasury of Qartmin to build a church for the (Syrian) Orthodox inside the city of Nisibis, a church which was twice rebuilt after Nestorians and Jews destroyed it, but was at last finished and consecrated by Simeon and the patriarch Julian in 706/7; that he died on Thursday 3 June 734, and was succeeded on the throne of Harran by Thomas, his disciple, also a monk of Qartmin.⁹⁵ The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* knows him as a contemporary of Theodotos of Amida (d. 698), the patriarch Elijah (d. 724) and Constantine of Edessa (d. 734/5), and mentions all these together in 720/1 and again in 728/9 (*sic*).⁹⁶ The *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin* commemorates him on 3 January ('Simeon of Harran') and again on the day of his death, 3 June ('Mor Simeon of the Olives, bishop of Harran, son of Mundar of Habsenus'). The interpolator of the *Life of Gabriel*, knowing the *Calendar* and the *Chronicle of 846*, needed only to know the name of the church in Nisibis (Mor Theodore) and its position (inside the East Gate) and to have heard that Simeon also built the mosque to the south of it, in order to be able to write section 25 of that *Life*.

There exists, however, a much more detailed account of Simeon's life, though in a

⁹² *Chr. Qartmin 819* and *Chr. 'Harran' 846* may both have been used: only the former has the date for Simeon's consecration (AG 1011 – though this is also in *L. Simeon of Olives*) and only the latter has the synod of the abbey of Mor Shilo, linked with Jacob of Edessa (1018); both sources have the building of the church in Nisibis, though without the name or any mention of the mosque to the south of it; both relate that the patriarch Julian came to consecrate it.

⁹³ *DTC*, vii, 1, *sub voce* 'Ignace (saint), évêque d'Antioche, martyr', cols. 685–6.

⁹⁴ *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.20c, p. 459.

⁹⁵ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 1011, 1018, 1045; cf. *Chr. 'Harran' 846*, AG 1018, 1045, writing 'Simeon' again, in error, for 'Thomas'.

⁹⁶ *Chr. Zuqnin 775*, pp. 160, 164; cf. p. 155 [Chabot, pp. 14, 18; cf. p. 11]; the author may have been confusing Theodotos of Amida with his namesake, Theodotos of Germaniceia, who died in 737/8 (*Chr. Qartmin 819* = *Chr. 'Harran' 846*, AG 1049).

debased form which demands the most critical analysis. It seems to derive from an early source with some title to authority. Further work has to be done on the manuscripts of this *Life of Simeon of the Olives*,⁹⁷ but it is so important for the history of Tur 'Abdin in our period that a first attempt must be made here to evaluate it and to trace its development. At this stage I must restrict myself to the manuscript which I was shown in Mardin and which proves to have been the exemplar used for the drastically edited version in Dolabani's *History of Qartmin*,⁹⁸ itself the basis for the only summary yet published in Europe.⁹⁹ The text was written in 1916 in very poor Syriac, with occasional lapses into the modern dialect.¹⁰⁰ The scribe refers to an Arabic version of the *Life of Simeon* (no doubt that preserved in Berlin) from which he made his abridged narrative of Simeon's supposed success at the court of al-Ma'mun in Baghdad.¹⁰¹ The true context of the story is the early ninth century and the original hero was Theodore Abu Qurra; in the Arabic version, perhaps as a ruse on the part of a Syrian Orthodox author to appropriate this Melkite hero, Simeon was identified with the famous Abu Qurra. It is probable that this Arabic version has infected the text in other places, too; the bad Syriac suggests considerable rewriting.

But the Arabic derived from an older Syriac text. Rabban Gabriel, the nephew of Bishop John of Qartmin, a native of Beth Svirina and a binder at Qartmin Abbey, appended a note to the text and, although the date was faultily copied, we are almost certainly able to identify him with a monk who was alive in 1168/9.¹⁰² This Gabriel says that he copied the *Life* in Harran, together with a special service and *husoyo* for Simeon of the Olives, and brought it from there to Qartmin.¹⁰³ Yet the original author was a monk of Qartmin: his pride in and preoccupation with the abbey pervade the text. He was also a native of Simeon's village Habsenus, every stone of which he knows. He happens to mention that all Habsenusites are quick-witted and good at learning!

⁹⁷ MS 9/16 of the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate in Damascus contains, according to the Arabic catalogue (on which see A. Palmer, *OC* 73 (1989), n. 11): 'The story of Mār Simeon al-Zaytūnī' amongst other hagiographical texts (the present patriarch made a search for this book on two separate occasions for my sake without success); cf. Fiey, *Nisibe* (1977), p. 72 n. 381. Paris, syr. 375 contains the same text on foll. 152a–210a, according to Briquel-Chatonnet, *Mus* 98 (1985), pp. 95–102.

⁹⁸ Dolabani, *History of Qartmin* (1959), pp. 125–60; the relationship is clear enough, and is confirmed by the fact that parts of this MS have been restored in Dolabani's hand. The number of the MS in the church of the Forty Martyrs at Mardin is 8.259, and the text is on pp. 203–47.

⁹⁹ S.P. Brock, *Ostik. St.*, 28 (1979), pp. 174–82; Baršawm published a summary in Arabic in the *Patriarchal Review* (Syrian Orthodox) of 1934, pp. 34–7, which is presumably based on the Damascus MS referred to in n. 97 above.

¹⁰⁰ e.g. p. 222: *lu jami* 'to the mosque'; p. 228: *w-fash* 'and he stayed'.

¹⁰¹ Berlin MS Sachau 87.2 (Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, pp. 758–61); on pp. 215–16 of the Mardin MS the scribe copies not only the Arab names of Simeon/Abu Qurra's debating partners, but also a number of Arabic words in Garshuni.

¹⁰² *Book of Life*, in Baršawm, *TA*, p. 93 (AG 1480): a conscientious bookbinder called Rabban Gabriel of Beth Svirina, 'son of the brother of Mor John, bishop of the Abbey [sc. of Qartmin]'; compare the colophon of Mardin MS 8.259 on p. 247: 'Pray for Rabban Gabriel, son of the brother of Mor John, bishop of the Abbey [sc. of Qartmin], from the family of Beth Patriq in Beth Svirina, who brought this story and the commemorative office and *husoyo* about Mor Simeon of the Olives [to the abbey]; he copied them in Harran and brought them to the abbey in the year 1 <...> 5 of the Greeks.' After this comes a note by a later copyist: 'This Rabban Gabriel and his brother Rabban Elisha were very conscientious in the service of the abbey. In their time they repaired 270 bound volumes in the abbey besides much else.' There was indeed a John of Beth Svirina who was bishop of Qartmin in the twelfth century (*Chr. Michael 1195*, Register XLIV, p. 767; *INSCR.* B.13; Baršawm, *TA*, p. 52; *Book of Life*, p. 3) and the *Book of Life* calls him 'Bar Patriq' (*loc. cit.*); see also A. Palmer, *OC* 73 (1989), with n. 20 there.

¹⁰³ See n. 102 above.

He also names a priest and a rector (*rish 'i(d)to*) of Habsenus. *Prima facie*, therefore, the colophon, stating that the *Life* was written by Simeon's great-nephew Job of Habsenus, a monk (of Qartmin?) resident at the (dependent) monastery of Mor Abhay in Beth Man'em, has credibility. The various anachronisms, inconsistencies and unbelievable statements which are scattered through the text can be explained as accretions, acquired during its journey to Harran and back or even later.

Only one anomaly seems to endanger the attribution of a historical kernel of the *Life of Simeon of the Olives* to Job of Habsenus: it concerns his uncle, Simeon's nephew, David. David plays an important role in the early part of the story, revolving around a legendary buried treasure. Later he is said to have gone with Job and two other nephews to Beth Man'em. At the end he is said to have been ordained bishop of Harran in Simeon's lifetime by Simeon himself.¹⁰⁴ Leaving aside the objections that bishops are made by election, not designation, and that at least three bishops must be present to ordain a fourth, we encounter the excellent evidence of the *Chronicle of 819*, that Simeon's successor at Harran was his disciple Thomas, who also attended the synod of Arbin in the next year (735/6) and died in 737/8. He is commemorated in the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin* on 5 July. The *Chronicle of 846* is very well instructed about the bishops of Harran; it also knows nothing of a bishop David in the eighth century. There existed a David, monk of Qartmin and bishop of Harran. He is commemorated in the *Calendar* on 4 February. But he was ordained between 846 and 873.¹⁰⁵ Most probably, one of the later redactors, seeing that there had been a Bishop David of Harran who was from Qartmin Abbey, jumped to the conclusion that he was identical with Simeon's nephew and edited him into the text in the unconvincing way we have observed. Thus Job's authority can be salvaged, if he merits it.

He does merit it, on three main counts. First, the village of Anhel emerges in the *Life* as the secular capital of Tur 'Abdin, seat of a ruling Melkite 'dynasty' of local governors, a state of affairs which fits very well into the world described by the late seventh-century *Life of Theodotos of Amida*; Abraham and Lazarus are named as 'leaders', who sent a work-force to rebuild the castle of Tur 'Abdin in 683/4 under the supervision of Simeon; George, the son of Lazarus, of Anhel, who 'was brought up in the West with the Romans' and 'had little faith in our local saints', was nevertheless persuaded to lend Simeon 300 workmen to build the church in Nisibis, finished in 706/7; Gabriel of Anhel, on the other hand, was an opponent of Simeon over the election of a certain bishop, apparently Lazarus of Tur 'Abdin (attested in 735 and 740); Moses of Anhel was a Syrian Orthodox writer of the time who praised the fame of Simeon (he may well have been the 'Moses of Tur 'Abdin' with whom Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) corresponded).¹⁰⁶ The connections between these men must be made by conjecture: George's father was surely the Lazarus active in 683/4. But the overall picture is convincing, and totally

unexpected. Nothing else is known about the early history of Anhel, but the church of Mor Cyriac could well be of the eighth century.¹⁰⁷

The second strong point in favour of this text is the mention of 'Mor Zechariah and Mor Cyril, brothers, of the village of 'Aynwardo', among the disciples of Simeon.¹⁰⁸ An inscription of 776/7 at Qartmin, engraved by Cyril of 'Aynwardo, relates how Zechariah of 'Aynwardo undertook to produce the stone kneading-trough on which the inscription stands, but had to give up because of his age and handed the work over to his *shawshbino* Isaiah of Fofyath.¹⁰⁹ Simeon died in 734. If his disciples were in their twenties then, they would have been in their late sixties when the trough was finished. The interval is appropriate and explains how Zechariah in the course of seven or eight years' work on the stone, which he had quarried in Beth Debeh, grew too old to supervise the arduous job of transporting it to Qartmin, fourteen miles away across rough country.¹¹⁰

Thirdly, in relating the deliberations of the synod which met in 700 to elect a successor to Elijah bar Guphne, bishop of Harran, our author names the bishops Thomas and Theodotos as supporters of Simeon.¹¹¹ The Theodotos in question was a friend from youth of the patriarch Julian and therefore cannot have been Theodotos of Amida, who in any case died in 698;¹¹² it was perhaps Theodotos of Germaniceia, who died in 737/8.¹¹³ But Bishop Thomas is almost certainly the Amidene prelate of that name whom the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* records as present at the synod of Mor Shilo in 705/6.¹¹⁴ As for Mor Isaiah of Nisibis, who, our author says, shared the supervision of the first building of the church of Mor Theodore in his city with Simeon of the Olives,¹¹⁵ he is unknown, like Elijah of Harran; Mor John of Tur 'Abdin, the predecessor of Lazarus, is also otherwise unknown.¹¹⁶ But it is unlikely that a later imaginative writer would have invented these names. It would be more like those fraudulent but unsubtle monks of the Middle Ages to invent connections with well-known figures of that time.

In addition to the above, Job (as we may with confidence call him) offers a credible explanation of Simeon's sobriquet, 'of the Olives':¹¹⁷ Simeon had charge of a monastery near the ruined Persian city of Serwan on the plain of Beth 'Araboey; this monastery belonged to Qartmin Abbey (as did another on Mount Singara); Simeon imported 12,000 olive-trees and planted them in the well-watered lands he bought around the monastery; he surrounded them with a wall, a fence of reeds and a ring of thorns and hired workmen and ploughmen to tend them; the trees bore fruit after only

¹⁰⁷ Wiessner, *Kultbauten*, pp. 212–23: similarities with the eighth-century (or earlier) church of Mor Cyriac at Arnas. In 1986 the priest of Anhel told me that the church was built by Simeon of the Olives!

¹⁰⁸ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 243 [Dolabani, p. 157]; summary, p. 179. ¹⁰⁹ *INSCR.* A.6.

¹¹⁰ Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 262: 'von bāḏibbe 4 st. nord nach der 'amer'; Pogonon, *Inscriptions*, p. 43. found it difficult to imagine what was meant by the phrase *men d-asev*, 'from the moment when he aged'.

¹¹¹ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 225 [Dolabani, p. 139]; incomplete; summary, p. 177.

¹¹² This detail was not in Dolabani, so Brock, *Ost. St.* 28 (1979), p. 181 n. 44, assumed an anachronistic identification with Theodotos of Amida. ¹¹³ See n. 96 above.

¹¹⁴ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 155 [Chabot, p. 11]. ¹¹⁵ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 219.

¹¹⁶ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 233 [Dolabani, p. 145]; summary, p. 177.

¹¹⁷ Independently attested in Berlin MS Sachau 349, fol. 158b (Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, pp. 43–51), which contains an impersonal form of service to be used on the feasts of Simeon of the Olives and of Mor Lazarus; Sachau estimated the age of this MS as tenth or eleventh century and said it came from Tur 'Abdin (perhaps from the monastery of Mor Lazarus founded by Simeon near Habsenus).

¹⁰⁴ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 242 [Dolabani, p. 154, modifying the text]; summary, p. 178.

¹⁰⁵ *Cal. TA*, 4 Feb.; *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xix.26, p. 756.

¹⁰⁶ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 225; Baršalibi, *Comm. Ev.* II(1), p. 224; George of B'eltan (the eighth-century patriarch; see Baumstark, *Geschichte*, pp. 269–70) also knew this letter (cf. *OC* 2 (1902), p. 442): 'Again in his letter to Moses' (*tout court*). Hage, *Jakobitische Kirche*, p. 106 follows the error of Assemani in taking Moses for a bishop of Tur 'Abdin: *BO* II, p. 158, whence Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, II (1790), p. 1528. Rumi, leader of Tur 'Abdin' is mentioned in *L. Simeon of Olives* (see p. 7) with the date 750/1; he may be Gabriel's successor. The name means 'Roman', which would suit a Melkite well.

five years (growers assure me this is unusual); the olives were not beaten down with sticks but picked up off the ground by monks and transported to Qartmin, where they were pressed; the oil thus produced provided for lighting in the abbey and was sold throughout Tur 'Abdin. This was a great success, because the plateau is too dry for olive-growing.¹¹⁸

Job also tells us the unobvious fact that Simeon, in converting Manichees, pagans and Jews in the region of Harran, instructed these last not to slaughter kids on Sundays.¹¹⁹ He gives the names of disciples of Simeon and scribes of his time, too exact to be invented, as well as referring by its title to the Chronicle of Jacob of Edessa, presented by Simeon, along with more than 180 books, to the library of Qartmin.¹²⁰ Particularly impressive and important for our theme is his catalogue of the buildings and profitable investments made by Simeon in Nisibis and elsewhere on behalf of Qartmin.¹²¹ The abbey was already a rich landowner; so much is evident, though we had no hint of it before in the history of the seventh century. By using its capital to build monasteries and churches in Nisibis, each endowed with mills, gardens, orchards, inns, bath-houses and so on, and by binding these establishments to send excess funds back into the coffers of Qartmin, he laid the foundations of the abbey's eighth-century prosperity. He also endowed it with villages, lands, mills and shops in many places; and he turned his opportunities as a bishop to the advantage of Qartmin. Nor did he forget his own village, Habsenus.¹²² He rebuilt the church there, founded a school and (re?) founded a monastery of Mor Lazarus to the south of the village. (At this point a later writer has interpolated the statement that Simeon built the round hermits' tower which is in that monastery; an inscription shows, however, that it was not built until 790/1.¹²³)

Like the interpolator of the *Life of Gabriel*, one might add: 'There is much more that could be said about this Mor Simeon of the Olives'.¹²⁴ To the chroniclers of 819 and 846 with their respective Qartminite and Harranite sympathies, he was the most important agent in establishing once more a 'western' Christian foothold in the city of Nisibis, which had been Persian since 363 and remained predominantly Nestorian. They do not make explicit the symbolism of Simeon's achievement, but in telling us that the patriarch Julian II (688–708) was present to consecrate in person the cathedral of the martyr Theodore, they reveal the significance that was attached to it. We may believe Job of Habsenus when he tells us that choice marble was brought overland from a Mediterranean port for its altar ('8 spans by 4 spans') and for the base of the *bēma*¹²⁵ (an architectural feature which is found once only in Tur 'Abdin¹²⁶). Its structure imitated that of ancient buildings, the walls being of hewn stone blocks, bricks and cement, the roof of great wooden beams. Julian, who so memorably crushed the

¹¹⁸ *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 210–11 [Dolabani, pp. 130–1]; summary, pp. 175–6.

¹¹⁹ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 232 [Dolabani, p. 143]; summary, p. 177.

¹²⁰ *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 239–40 (especially noteworthy are the calligrapher Daniel of Kendirib and the (miniature-) painters and scribes of the monastery of Kfar Tévno at Harran; the MS of Jacob of Edessa's Chronicle was illustrated) [Dolabani, p. 153]; summary, p. 178.

¹²¹ *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 213–14, 217–23, 240 [Dolabani, pp. 133–8]; summary, pp. 176–7.

¹²² *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 238–9 [Dolabani, pp. 151–2]; summary, p. 178. ¹²³ *INSCR. A.9.*

¹²⁴ *xc.4–5.* ¹²⁵ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 218.

¹²⁶ cf. R.F. Taft, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 34 (1968), pp. 326–59; the *bēma* features in the cathedral liturgy of Amida as described in *L. Theodotos*, foll. 64b.1, 65b.3: the bishop stands there to preach. For the *bēma* at Kfarze, see p. 135.

insubordinate Denho, metropolitan of Tagrit, in the monastery of Mor Matthew,¹²⁷ no doubt saw this church as a symbol of his legitimate historical claim to primacy over the East. The whole event shows the same deceptive confidence and the same craving for the symbols of a return to the old order as the dramatic action of Julian's successor, Elijah (709/24), who, in the last year of his life, became the first 'Orthodox' patriarch to enter Antioch since the exile of Severus and sealed the deed with the consecration of a new church, thus strengthening the case of his church to be treated as *the* Orthodox Church under the caliphate.¹²⁸

3. The cultural and political context

The *Life of Theodotos of Amida* is also important for the history of Tur 'Abdin. The historical credentials of this biography are good. There is no reason to doubt the endnote, which tells us that it was written down by the priest-cantor Simeon of Samosata as it was related to him by the priest Joseph.¹²⁹ Joseph, being the disciple of Theodotos, was an eyewitness to most of the events he describes. Some linguistic and stylistic features point to a process of dictation, in which the scribe systematically changed Joseph's *Ichbericht* into the third person; at one point a remark of the scribe intrudes: 'Here he tells that Theodotos' disciple was a monk of Zuqnin and that it was he who used to carry his letters for him.'¹³⁰

In spite of the numerous miracles, the biography seems firmly rooted in a real but unfamiliar historical context. Yet the 'stage' is not 'set' in terms of recognizable historical landmarks; the Arab conquest is not mentioned except allusively and no names of Byzantine emperors, Muslim caliphs or Arab prefects are mentioned. The geography, although the routes described are by no means familiar ones, is accurate. The implied position of the Arab–Byzantine frontier at an uncertain date between 680 and 690 tallies with what is known of this unstable factor at that time.¹³¹ A governor of Samosata in the same period is named as Elustriya (Illustrios) of Harran.¹³² Now, reliable chronicles tell of a Byzantine invasion of the Samosata region under Tiberius Apsimar (698–705), in which many captives were taken,¹³³ and of the action taken by Tiberius' successor, Justinian II, 'the Noseless', in setting free 'Elustriya son of 'Araq of Harran' and 6,000 Arab captives at his accession in 705;¹³⁴ there can be little doubt that he intended thus to undo his hated predecessor's work, and that this Elustriya was the governor of Samosata mentioned in the *Life of Theodotos*.

Michael's Chronicle (based here on the contemporary Jacob of Edessa) tells us that most of the cities and regions of Mesopotamia in the late seventh century were still governed by Christians.¹³⁵ This fact is to be attributed to the need for continuity in

¹²⁷ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.23c, pp. 469–70. ¹²⁸ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 92.

¹²⁹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 68b.3. ¹³⁰ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 60b.2.

¹³¹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 62b.1–2 (travelling from Claudia, where a (Byzantine) raid is expected, to Lake Hure (Anzitene), where the Byzantine castles are getting ready to meet an (Arab) raiding party); cf. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber* (1976), p. 72 (Melitene in Byzantine hands in 668), p. 89 (instability of frontier and uncertainty as to fate of cities), p. 112 (Melitene in Byzantine hands in or before 695), p. 134: Map 'Die arabischen Einfälle nach Kleinasien 680–720 a.d.'

¹³² *L. Theodotos*, fol. 61a.2. ¹³³ e.g. *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.16a, p. 448.

¹³⁴ *Chr. Edessa* 1234, p. 298; cf. *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.17a, p. 450.

¹³⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.16a, p. 449.

provincial administration during the long period of the Arabs' apprenticeship in empire. In Persian territory, where these things are better documented, the conquerors took over existing arrangements and entrusted their execution to the same local aristocracies that had governed under the Sassanids.¹³⁶ They only insisted that tribute be paid in full; but even this tribute was assessed along the lines of the Iranian taxation system.¹³⁷ In Roman territory, Byzantine currency and the Greek language persisted in official usage until, respectively, 696/7 (Michael) and 710/11.¹³⁸ In Theodotos' lifetime, therefore, Greek-speaking scribes, accountants and tax-collectors were needed to run the provinces of the upper Tigris and Euphrates basins. These were doubtless Melkites, that is, members of the group that had followed the imperial church of Byzantium in matters of dogma during the sixth and early seventh centuries. They held the reins of local government when the Arabs arrived and they had the best opportunity for acquiring an education in Byzantine administrative skills. It is thus perfectly congruent that the governor of Tur 'Abdin in the last years of the seventh century was a Melkite, as the *Life of Simeon of the Olives* plainly implies.¹³⁹ Elusṭriya of Harran, with his Greco-Roman name, reminiscent of high Byzantine titulature, and with his Christian, but anti-Orthodox, tax-collector, Sergius, was surely another of these Melkite governors. The majority of those placed under him were Syrian Orthodox, so it is no surprise to find that his local representative in the region of Claudia, who was no doubt a landowner responsible for the timely submission of tribute and the general good order of his neighbourhood, was John of Singis, a Syrian Orthodox.¹⁴⁰ As Orthodox bishop of Amida, Theodotos was obliged to forbid his clergy to take up such a secular post, whether as *epitropos*, like John, or as *salaro* (*sakellarios*?), or whatever.¹⁴¹ It is significant that the officers have Greek names in Syriac: even the governors are called *arkhune* = *arkhontes*, although the official term would have been *hēgemōn*.¹⁴²

This state of affairs was naturally accompanied by much ambivalence in the relationships between Syrian Orthodox and Melkites, Melkites and Arabs, Arabs and Syrian Orthodox, and between all these parties and the Byzantines. (Nestorians from the former Persian territories were also infiltrating Mesopotamia at this time, much to Theodotos' indignation; but their numbers were small.) Thus we find Theodotos in correspondence with the commanders of the Byzantine castles by Lake Hure (Hazar Gölü) on the northern side of the Ergani pass;¹⁴³ but when he visits them and is begged by them to use his prayers to ward off an Arab invasion by the dreaded *GYDR* (read 'Jandar', 'Jandal'?¹⁴⁴), he extracts first an undertaking that they will not intimidate the local peasants, who were Syrian Orthodox, into renouncing their opposition to the Byzantine church.¹⁴⁵ No doubt because of these contacts, Theodotos was later suspected by the Arab governor of Amida (in which city alone of those visited by

Theodotos we encounter a 'garrison' of Arab horsemen) of collusion with the enemy; he was subjected to a violent interrogation in the city mosque, which nearly provoked a riot in Amida, because he had just been chosen for ordination as its bishop.¹⁴⁶ Yet he had previously been taken for a spy on behalf of the Arabs by thieves in the mountains south of the river Arsenias, who threatened to deliver him over to the Byzantines in Anzitene.¹⁴⁷ As bishop of Amida, he organized a public collection from 'Mhagroye' (Arabs) and Christians alike to buy off some raiders (perhaps Mardaïtes).¹⁴⁸ His jurisdiction over the generality of Christians in Amida was confirmed by the highest Arab authority in Northern Mesopotamia (here called 'the holder of authority in all the East').¹⁴⁹

The governor of Tur 'Abdin was a wounded veteran of the Arab attack on Nisibis in 639;¹⁵⁰ this is the only allusion in the *Life of Theodotos* to the Arab conquest itself. We read there: 'Now the governor had received an arrow-wound in the battle against the Arabs when they attacked Nisibis'.¹⁵¹ He had fought on the Byzantine side, it seems, yet now he was governing Tur 'Abdin for the Arabs. The governor of Dara was another Elusṭriya.¹⁵² He, too, seems to have been a Melkite, though Theodotos' biographer is tactfully silent about his denomination; for he was nonetheless a benefactor of the Syrian Orthodox church. Like the unnamed governor of Tur 'Abdin,¹⁵³ he was impressed by genuine sanctity, even if it came from the wrong side. He struck a bargain with Theodotos, that the holy man would stay in the province of Dara provided that the monastery he chose to stay in should pay no taxes to the 'king' (caliph): 'I shall pay them out of my own house as long as you live',¹⁵⁴ promised Elusṭriya, thus demonstrating (to us) that he was only required to collect the right amount of tribute, no matter by what means. Later, Elusṭriya invited Theodotos to build a new monastery near that of Mor Abay above Qelesh on the site, as Theodotos maintained, of the original monastic settlement and *martyrium*.¹⁵⁵ Almost certainly it was the daughter of this Elusṭriya who became a benefactress in her own right (this alone shows a certain debt to Greco-Roman aristocratic traditions) of the abbey of Qartmin. Her name, characteristically, was Patricia;¹⁵⁶ the same name is found on a funereal inscription of 760 commemorating 'My Lady Mary daughter of Lazarus, the son of Peṭruno, and daughter of Patricia, the daughter of QNDYTS (Kandidatos?), from Dara'.¹⁵⁷ The two Patricias cannot have been the same; but the benefactress of Qartmin thought it sufficient to have her own and her father's names inscribed without any further title or identification, a confidence which implies great eminence. This fact, as well as the extreme rarity of the name, points to Theodotos' friend, the governor of Dara. The letter-forms confirm an eighth-century date; and it would be surprising to find such a hellenized aristocracy surviving in Dara beyond the later years of that century. Elusṭriya of Dara, in spite of

¹³⁶ Dennett, *Conversion*, p. 14.¹³⁷ Dennett, *Conversion*, pp. 14, 17.¹³⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.16a, p. 447, xi.17b, p. 451; A.A. Duri, *ET* 11 (1965), p. 324; cf. P. Grierson, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1960), pp. 241-64.¹³⁹ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 219 [Dolabani, p. 136]; summary, p. 176; note also that the governor of Tur 'Abdin in 750/1 was called Rumi, 'the Roman' (see Introduction, n. 20).¹⁴⁰ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 62a.3: 'John, *epitropos* of Claudia'.¹⁴¹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 65a.2.¹⁴² According to J.R. Martindale (personal communication).¹⁴³ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 60b.2.¹⁴⁴ Both of these names are listed in the index to Tabari. No evidence of an Arab name corresponding to *GYDR* has come to my attention.¹⁴⁵ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 62b.2.¹⁴⁶ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 64a.2.¹⁴⁷ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 63a.1.¹⁴⁸ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 64b.3.¹⁴⁹ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 65a.3.¹⁵⁰ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 63b.1; this date is given (against Baladhuri and Khwarizmi) by E. Honigmann, *ET* 11 (1936), p. 928.¹⁵¹ *loc. cit.*¹⁵² *loc. cit.*¹⁵³ *loc. cit.*: "Then that *arkhōn* said, "Behold in truth a disciple of Christ, behold a blessed one among men..."¹⁵⁴ *loc. cit.*; the word 'tax' is represented here equally by *madatho* (the ancient Akkadian word *madatu*) and *gziho* (= Arabic *jizya*).¹⁵⁵ *L. Theodotos*, fol. 66b.3.¹⁵⁶ *INSCR. C. I.*¹⁵⁷ *INSCR. A. 4.*

his hellenism and presumed Chalcedonian tenets, was a friend of the Syrian Orthodox and his daughter would seem to have continued this tradition.

It is against this complex background of interdependence, qualified by ideological and political divisions, so different from the simplistic scenarios of the more legendary saints' *Lives* and so similar to the world as we know it, that the events of the seventh and eighth centuries in Tur 'Abdin have to be seen. Besides this rich contextual contribution, the *Life of Theodoros* adds certain facts to the annals of Tur 'Abdin. From it we learn of Elijah, who is called 'bishop of the monastery of Mor Simeon of Qartmin', in the context of a visit to that monastery which Theodoros made not long before he became bishop of Amida, that is, about the year 690.¹⁵⁸ It seems that this appellation came to the lips of Joseph because the bishop was resident in the monastery, whereas officially Elijah would have been 'bishop of Tur 'Abdin'; he is no doubt 'Bishop Elijah from 'Aynwardo' whose commemoration fell on 25 February.¹⁵⁹

Theodoros died in August, 698.

In the days of Mor Gabriel of Dara, Mor Mathew of Amida, Mor Sergius of Mardin, Mor Ahay of Tur 'Abdin and Mor Elijah of Mayperqai. These bishops and their cities honoured the commemoration of the holy man and in their country he took his final repose. He was buried near Qeleih in the monastery which he loved and in the land which he held dear.¹⁶⁰

This closing paragraph tells us the name of an otherwise unknown bishop of Tur 'Abdin.¹⁶¹ His successors, too, are little more than names to us. One probably died in 718/19;¹⁶² he is to be identified with the Bishop John mentioned in the *Life of Simeon of the Olives*.¹⁶³ The appointment of the next bishop was disputed by a violent party in the upland diocese, among whom Gabriel of Anhel, perhaps the descendant of the Melkite governors of Tur 'Abdin, is named as a leader. The name of the controversial bishop is not given, but he was probably Lazarus, who attended the Synod of Arbin in 735/6¹⁶⁴ and whose name is again found in an inscription at Hah, dated AG (10)51 (AD 739/40).¹⁶⁵ A monk Lazarus of Qartmin is noted c.690 in the *Life of Theodoros*.¹⁶⁶ Lazarus was succeeded in 743/4 by Athanasius of Nunib, who had been abbot of Qartmin since 718/19. (This fact indicates that the functions of abbot and bishop were no longer combined at this date as they had been under Daniel and Gabriel.) An old man at his accession, he only reigned until 746/7.¹⁶⁷

The length of his reign as abbot may explain why the *Qartminite Chronicle of 819* notes the successive stages of his career, though it only mentions Lazarus in passing and John, Ahay and Elijah not at all; alternatively, we might attribute this exception to the

¹⁵⁸ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 63b:1. ¹⁵⁹ *Cal. T. A.* 25 Feb.

¹⁶⁰ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 68b.2. ¹⁶¹ Signalled, with Mor Elijah, by Dolabani, *History of Qartmin* (1959), pp. 12-13.

¹⁶² *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 1090: the death of the resident bishop at Qartmin probably meant the elevation of the abbot as his successor and the consequent appointment of a new abbot. (Lazarus) was the *Qartminite* candidate in the battle for the succession to Bishop John, and it is clear that Gabriel, Athanasius' successor as abbot, expected to 'inherit' his see (p. 305).

¹⁶³ *L. Simeon of Olives* records four visits by Simeon to Qartmin after his consecration in 700 and before his final retirement in early 731, stating that the visits always took place after Pentecost. The second visit thus took place between 702 and 728; it was on this occasion that bishop John had just died (p. 233) [Dolabani, p. 145], summary, p. 177). ¹⁶⁴ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 1047. ¹⁶⁵ *INSCR. A. 2.*

¹⁶⁶ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 63a.3.

¹⁶⁷ *Chr. Qartmin 819*, AG 1030: cf. *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.22c, p. 46a.

fact that a certain 'Daniel, the son of Moses, of Tur 'Abdin', the maternal grandfather of the great patriarch and historian Denis of Tell-Mahre (818-45), was composing his 'History' in the years following the death of Athanasius, a work which was partly concerned with that bishop's namesake, Athanasius Sandloyo.¹⁶⁸ The intrigues of Sandloyo in the early fifties of the eighth century closely involved the disputed succession to the see of Tur 'Abdin, which remained vacant for about five years after the death of Athanasius of Nunib. This Athanasius probably featured, therefore, in Daniel's introduction to the history of these years and the facts about him may have come from Daniel into the *Chronicle of 819*; the character of Daniel's work, however, insofar as it is known, accords ill with the precise, annalistic style of these entries.

4. Athanasius Sandloyo, metropolitan of Mesopotamia

Daniel, the son of Moses of Tur 'Abdin, is explicitly credited with two tales of deceit, one told in admiration, the other with disapproval. The first is that of Athanasius bar Gumoye. The Gumoye family was closely allied with the Tell-Mahroye family late in the eighth century,¹⁶⁹ and Denis of Tell-Mahre tells us that his mother was a daughter of Daniel,¹⁷⁰ so it may be conjectured that Daniel counted Athanasius among his ancestors. He told how Athanasius, having obtained custody of the ancient Edessene icon of Christ, substituted a cunning facsimile when he was asked to return it and retained the original, for which he built a new baptistery in Edessa.¹⁷¹ The point of the story, according to Denis of Tell-Mahre, is that Athanasius thus brought the true icon into the possession of the Syrian Orthodox.¹⁷² The second story concerns another Athanasius, the famous bishop of Mayperqai, nicknamed Sandloyo. Daniel told how Sandloyo, entrusted with the organization of the election of a patriarch by lot in 740, wrote the same name on all three lots and thus fixed by fraud the election of Iwannis.¹⁷³ Both anecdotes are facile and unsatisfactory. If the facsimile was so good that it could not be distinguished from the original, what proof was there that Athanasius had the original? If Sandloyo perpetrated a fraud at the election of Iwannis, how did the fact ever come to light? No objection was raised at the time, and Athanasius continued to enjoy universal respect for another decade, until he fell out of favour with the patriarch. It hardly seems likely that he confessed his fraud. On the other hand, there was every motive for his opponents in the church to blacken his name.

Denis of Tell-Mahre was uncritical in his retelling of these anecdotes, though he added to them something of his own.¹⁷⁴ Yet his opinion of his grandfather as a historian was qualified. He says that Daniel 'wrote stories in the manner of ecclesiastical history' without a linking historical narrative and without a clear chronological framework.¹⁷⁵ What he does not say (perhaps because his judgement was affected by his own experience of monastic insubordination to his authority as patriarch), is that Daniel shows a clear bias against Athanasius Sandloyo, a monk of Qartmin. In fact,

¹⁶⁸ *Chr. Elijah 1018*, i, p. 168 (AH 122/AG 1051). ¹⁶⁹ *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.4b, p. 485.

¹⁷⁰ *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.16b, p. 449, reading 'Doniyel bar Maure' for 'Doniyel bar Samuyel' (cf. *ibid.*, x.20, p. 378).

¹⁷¹ *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.16b, pp. 447-9.

¹⁷² *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.16b, p. 449.

¹⁷³ *Chr. Elijah 1018*, i, p. 168 (AH 122/AG 1051); cf. *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.21c, pp. 462-3.

¹⁷⁴ *Chr. Michael 1195*, xi.16b, p. 449; xi.21c, p. 463. ¹⁷⁵ *Chr. Michael 1195*, x.20, p. 378.

Daniel must have been his grandson's source for most of what he wrote about the rebel bishops of the mid-eighth century, many of whom sprang from Qartmin. We recognize his predilection for tales of fraud in what Denis wrote about Cyriac and about Isaac, for instance; and here, too, the anecdotes hardly stand up to critical scrutiny.

Cyriac was one of the contenders for the vacant see of Tur 'Abdin after the death of Athanasius of Numb. He was in favour with the caliph Marwan. Denis writes that he achieved this by forging a prophecy concerning the dynastic succession of this caliph in a book called 'The Revelation of Enoch'.¹⁷⁶ Isaac, who was, like Cyriac, a monk of Qartmin, became bishop of Harran in 752.¹⁷⁷ and succeeded Iwannis as patriarch in 755/6, to reign for only one year before dying on a visit to the court of the caliph al-Mansur. Denis would have us believe that Isaac entered the favour of Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur on the strength of a small bag of elixir, taken from the purse of a wandering monk whom he had murdered. The poor monk had committed the indiscretion of demonstrating to Isaac how the powder could turn lead into gold. But without a formula, Isaac could not replenish his supplies. The caliph made him patriarch (by ordering the synod of bishops to elect him), in order to give him freedom to search for alchemical ingredients! His failure, after one year, to produce a result, caused al-Mansur to have him strangled and thrown in the river.¹⁷⁸ It is almost incredible that modern historians should have continued to detail this 'information' with a straight face.¹⁷⁹

Abramowski first suggested caution in reading the patriarchal accounts of the various schisms between the mid-eighth century and the time of Denis of Tell-Mahre: a certain monastic rivalry existed between the great patriarchal monastery of Qenneshtre and the 'upstart' Qartmin and coloured the portraits of the principal opponents.¹⁸⁰ Iwannis and Sandloyo both used the funds made available to them by their office to obtain the support of the notoriously anti-Christian caliph Marwan, but the former was virtually canonized, the latter made a villain in the chronicle of Denis. In his own territory, Sandloyo was a saint, twice commemorated in the *Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*.¹⁸¹ The Qartminite *Chronicle of 819* (followed by the *Chronicle of 846*) has no hint of a sinister side to Sandloyo's career: it preserves the information that he was already 'metropolitan of Mesopotamia' in AG 1054 (742/3), a fact suppressed in the patriarchal tradition, although (indeed, *because*) it alone makes Sandloyo's resistance to patriarchal authority comprehensible. The *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, which shows a certain familiarity with Qartmin, has fine epithets for Sandloyo and is notably discreet about his mysterious and apparently violent end.¹⁸² This is not to say that Sandloyo behaved like a saint, but that it was hypocritical of the patriarchal party to blame him for having recourse to secular authority to sustain his jurisdictional claims.

¹⁷⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.22c, p. 465.
¹⁷⁷ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.24c, p. 471; *Chr. Qartmin* 819 = *Chr. Harran* 846, AG 1066.
¹⁷⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.25c, pp. 473-5; cf. *Chr. Brooks* 813, ad int.; *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, pp. 210-11 (Chabot, pp. 58, 59).
¹⁷⁹ e.g. Hage, *Jakobitische Kirche*, p. 20.
¹⁸⁰ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 95 (n. 1), p. 102 (n. 1).
¹⁸¹ *Cal. T.A.* 21 May, 11 July; cf. *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 1069; *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.25c, p. 475; buried in the monastery he built above Tell-Beshmay (on which see *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 210 and Krüger, *Monachium*, II, pp. 11-14) and honoured there in the time of Denis.
¹⁸² *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 211 (Chabot, p. 59); but he does concede that many were 'scandalized' by him because of the caliph's interference in the process of his election.

Denis admits that Iwannis alienated many bishops by aligning his authority with that of the caliph and using the secular arm to impose his will.¹⁸³ He was not the first patriarch to do so: Severus bar Mashgeh had been equally blatant.¹⁸⁴ He, too, had provoked a rebellion, in which the monasteries of Mor Matthew and of Qartmin had played a leading role.¹⁸⁵ It was Iwannis' cavalier attitude to metropolitan autonomy which again united these forces in opposition to the patriarchate.

In the late 740s, giving way to secular pressures, he ordained a certain Abay, formerly bishop of Arzon, to the see of Amidā.¹⁸⁶ But Sandloyo, presumably in his capacity as 'metropolitan of Mesopotamia', had already appointed his disciple, Isaiah of Asparin, to administer the greater part of the diocese during the senility of the previous bishop, Severus, and this Isaiah was considered 'their apparent' to the see. Sandloyo and Isaiah were slighted; but the dispute would not have escalated in the way it did but for the involvement of the bishops of Mor Matthew (anomalously, there were several bishops in this monastery, a fact which gave it a disproportionate influence in the general synods of the church).

The Mathaeans had also inflamed the dispute over the see of Tur 'Abdin, which was started by Cyriac, bishop of Segestan. This Cyriac, a monk of Qartmin, had used his influence with the caliph to prevent the patriarch from ordaining Denis, another Qartminite, to the see after the death of Athanasius of Numb. He thus had caused Iwannis to flout the metropolitan authority of Sandloyo, who had designated Denis in all propriety, with the consent of the patriarch and of the people of Tur 'Abdin. The Mathaeans, self-styled champions of the principle of metropolitan sovereignty, sided with Athanasius Sandloyo over these two incidents, both of which were brought about by the manipulation of Iwannis through the secular arm by ambitious bishops. Iwannis had only himself to blame, because he rested his authority so totally on the approval of the caliph.

It is vital that the nature of Sandloyo's metropolitan jurisdiction be investigated. As bishop of Maypergat during the reign of a senile bishop in Amidā, and as the most distinguished elder in the church, he may well have originally obtained the title by patriarchal consent, with reference to ancient history: Morutho of Maypergat is referred to by Socrates as 'bishop of Mesopotamia' in the early fifth century.¹⁸⁷ At that time, Mesopotamia surely meant the Roman province, of which Amidā was the secular, normally also the ecclesiastical, capital.¹⁸⁸ But by the translation of 'Mesopotamia' as 'Jazira' an ambiguity was introduced, for 'al-Jazira', in Arabic, meant a much larger area, including, for instance, Osrhoene and Mt. Singara. This ambiguity was exploited by Sandloyo after his alienation from the patriarch Iwannis, and it was probably in this

¹⁸³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.22c, pp. 464, 467.
¹⁸⁴ *Michael*, loc. cit., preserves the adverse judgement of Denis concerning this patriarch.
¹⁸⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.22c, p. 467.
¹⁸⁶ Socrates, vi.15 and vii.8; see Homblum, *Die Origene des byzantinischen Reiches* (1935), p. 8: the title was at that time equivalent to 'bishop of Sophanene'.
¹⁸⁷ Amidā is most prominent under the title of Dux Mesopotamiae in *Notit. Dign.*, pp. 77-8; at Ephesus in 431 'Asenios the metropolitan of Amidā' was the only bishop present from the province of Mesopotamia (*ACO* I, i, 5, p. 123); likewise at Ephesus in 449 (*Acta Episcopi* 449, p. 7) and at Chalcedon in 451 (*ACO* II, i, p. 416f). 'Symeon of Amidā': it is of the greatest significance that the fortunes of Amidā had declined under the Arabs, while Maypergat had become the foremost city in the Upper Tigris region (S. Guyer, *Reperitorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 38 (1916), p. 232).

sense that the schismatic (albeit formally legitimate) synod of Tella in 752 registered its recognition of his authority.¹⁸⁹

After that decision (although it was fiercely repudiated by the people of many dioceses and had only been obtained by the implicit threat of secular reprisals¹⁹⁰), Sandloyno symbolized his victory by the erection of a magnificent cathedral at Mayperqat.¹⁹¹ He went on to display his enlarged authority by ordaining Isaac as bishop of Harran.¹⁹² Timothy of Edessa objected that the title of 'Metropolitan of Mesopotamia' belonged by ancient right to his see, thus demonstrating that the broad interpretation of the term 'Mesopotamia' was now taken for granted.¹⁹³ What Timothy meant by Edessa's 'ancient right' was that Edessa had always been the general 'metropolis' of the upper Tigris and Euphrates regions, in the sense that it was the mother of Syriac culture. He did not need to use this argument, since Harran is in Osrhoene, which was in all formality the metropolitan province of Edessa; that he made no reference to Osrhoene is a sign that Sandloyno's tactic of aligning his ecclesiastical authority with that of the secular governor of Jazira had been successful.

Flaunting still further his powers, Sandloyno went on to depose the bishops of Samosata and of Singara.¹⁹⁴ It was no wonder that he earned the enmity of a number of bishops by his high-handed actions. Besides Timothy of Edessa, David of Dara (another Qartminite) and Sarguno of Mardin opposed him. Sandloyno found he had overestimated the strength of his enemies; he was unable to remove them by secular authority.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the new caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur helped Sandloyno's protégé, Isaac, to the patriarchate; Athanasius himself succeeded Isaac, though without the overt intervention of the caliph, which explains why his name, but not Isaac's, was included in the official register of patriarchs.¹⁹⁶ As Athanasius IV of Antioch he reigned from 756 to 758.¹⁹⁷ The rumours which sprang up concerning his sudden end bear the imprint of fantasy, perhaps also of the literary predilections of Daniel of Tur 'Abdin.¹⁹⁸ But, whatever the truth may be, it does not seem improbable that one who had so freely resorted to ultimatums should provoke in turn the ultimate response of murder.

When tales of alchemy – and prophecy – are dismissed, the chief instrument used by Sandloyno, by his allies, and by his opponents to obtain the favour of the Arab governors and caliphs was lustre; rhetoric and slander were freely added by way of garnishing the dish. It follows that the protagonists in this drama enjoyed plentiful cash supplies. Every bishop, *a fortiori* every metropolitan and every patriarch, disposed of the customary contributions of his diocese, and it is significant that Sandloyno accused Iwanis of collecting 150,000 pieces of silver in the province of the metropolitan of Tigris 'and in the East'.¹⁹⁹ In addition, where the pride of a monastic party was at

stake, a bishop might obtain considerable funds from his monastery to enable him to play the matador in the political bull-ring.²⁰⁰ We have seen that the abbey of Qartmin was well-endowed in the early eighth century. Thanks to Simeon of the Olives, the profits would have accrued from these endowments without further outlay. By the 740s the see of Tur 'Abdin, which gave access to these funds, had become the object of much covetousness among ambitious monks.²⁰¹ Denis, who was designated for it, seems to have lacked the ruthlessness required in church politics at that time; he also suffered from the rivalry of his two patrons (both, like himself, monks of Qartmin), Sandloyno and David of Dara. Yet he died at Baghdad in 762 as bishop of Harran.²⁰² Cyriac of Segestan and Gabriel, abbot of Qartmin, agreed with the monks of Qartmin to keep out Abay of Arzon, the only serious contender who was not a Qartminite;²⁰³ but by the time it became necessary to make a final decision between Cyriac and Gabriel, Sandloyno found he needed the support of two bishops rather than one. The patriarch had set the precedent for dividing a diocese; now Sandloyno made Gabriel bishop of a small part of the region²⁰⁴ while leaving the bulk of it under Cyriac.²⁰⁵ The latter had signed his name under the acts of the synod of Tella as 'bishop of Tur 'Abdin and Hesno d-Kifo';²⁰⁶ indicating perhaps that Hesno d-Kifo had previously been in another diocese, as it was in the fourth and fifth centuries.²⁰⁷ As for Gabriel, an inscription at Qartmin dated 757/8 describes him as 'Abbas Mor Gabriel, superior of the monastery',²⁰⁸ the title 'Abbas' is given to several bishops of the late seventh and early eighth centuries in the chronicles,²⁰⁹ whereas I know of no comparable instance of its use by a mere abbot. The fact that Gabriel uses it here instead of 'bishop' suggests that an attempt was made to retain the formal unity of the diocese, while satisfying the abbot's desire for episcopal rank.

Cyriac had originally been ordained for Segestan in the Iranian highlands, one of the furthest-flung dioceses of the Syrian Orthodox church, which was created for the sake of Mesopotamians transported there by the Persian shah. No wonder this ambitious man wished to be closer to the seat of power and free of the embarrassment of living among enemies of the caliph, who would look darkly on his attempts to curry favour at the Arab court!²¹⁰ Segestan was the bitterest exile for such a man. The text of Michael's Chronicle is suspect where it says that 'Gabriel was ordained by Cyriac publicly for Segestan, but secretly for Tur 'Abdin; and they were a stumbling-stone to one another'.²¹¹ Why should Cyriac connive at his rival's ambition? Whatever the explanation of this, Gabriel's manoeuvres had been complex. He tried his luck with the patriarch at first, but not getting what he wanted, turned to Athanasius, for which the chronicler calls him 'the three-tongued Gabriel'.²¹² Cyriac had been equally versatile.

²⁰⁰ The image is borrowed from Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 102 (n. 1); accordingly, the patriarch would be the baited bull, 'not knowing whom he should conciliate, the caliph, the bishops or the people' (Chr. Michael 1195, xi.22c, p. 467).

²⁰¹ Chr. 'Harran' 846, AG 1073. ²⁰² Chr. Michael 1195, xi.22c, pp. 464, 465.

²⁰³ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, pp. 472–3. ²⁰⁴ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.33b, p. 470; cf. Chr. Zuqnin 775, p. 213 (Chabot, p. 60): 'Cyriac of Tur 'Abdin'.

²⁰⁵ See pp. xxii. ²⁰⁶ JNSOR, A.3.

²⁰⁷ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.14c, p. 440 (right column, line 16), p. 441 (left column, 6th line up), xi.16c, p. 448 (right column, 5th line up), xi.19c, p. 457 (left column, line 4); Chr. Zuqnin 775, p. 329.

²⁰⁸ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.22c, p. 465.

²⁰⁹ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.23c, p. 469.

²¹⁰ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 472 (not 'trigamous', *pace* Chabot, translation, p. 520 n. 4).

²¹¹ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 472.

²¹² Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 472.

¹⁸⁹ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.23b, pp. 469–70.

¹⁹⁰ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.23b, p. 471.

¹⁹¹ *loc. cit.* ¹⁹² Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 471.

¹⁹³ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 472.

¹⁹⁴ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.24c, p. 473.

¹⁹⁵ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.25c, pp. 473–5; Register xv, p. 753; Chr. Zuqnin 775, p. 211; contrast Chr. Qartmin 819 = Chr. 'Harran' 846, AG 1066, 1067, where Isaac (like David: AG 1073) is admitted to have been illegitimately consecrated, but not Athanasius. The story that he was another piece of historical slander.

¹⁹⁶ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.25c, p. 475; Register xv, p. 753; Chr. Qartmin 819 = Chr. 'Harran' 846, AG 1066, 1069; Chr. Gregory II, col. 319.

¹⁹⁷ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.25c, p. 475; cf. Chr. Zuqnin 775, p. 211.

¹⁹⁸ Chr. Michael 1195, xi.25c, p. 468.

He was the enemy of Sandloyo until the death of Marwan deprived him of his main support; then he became his friend.²¹²

It seems likely that the capital of Tur 'Abdin under Bishop Cyriac was once more Hah; a precedent is always sought in the historical tradition, especially when the real motive is innovation. In 1088/9, when the diocese was permanently divided according to the precedent set by Sandloyo, one bishop was at Qartmin and the other, the bishop of Tur 'Abdin, was at Hah.²¹³ Syrian Orthodox bishops loved to reside in monasteries and it seems that the Monastery of the Cross in Beth El, some two and a half hours' walk away from Hah to the north, was chosen for this purpose.²¹⁴ Cyriac is named as 'our bishop' in an inscription dated 75(3?) at Salah.²¹⁵ He was present as bishop of Tur 'Abdin at the synod of Mabbugh in 758/9, when the patriarch George was elected.²¹⁶ He appears with the date 760/1 in an inscription at Arnas.²¹⁷ At some time between 767 and 775, that is during the illegitimate patriarchate of David, 'the holy Mor Cyriac' persuaded the anti-patriarch to imprison at Harran a self-styled prophet from Hah, whom his followers called 'Mor Morutho'.²¹⁸ he was only a deacon, reports the contemporary *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, yet he sat on a throne and consecrated the Chrism with his spittle. Even from behind bars the 'false prophet' continued to influence a vast crowd. Considering the behaviour of the bishops at this time, it is not surprising that such a preacher was able to set the people against their bishop, even to make them 'wish to kill him'.²¹⁹ The date of Cyriac's death is not recorded, but an inscription at the Monastery of the Cross shows that he had a successor, S(ovo?), who was alive between 775, when the patriarch George was released from prison, and 790, when George died.²²⁰ It is uncertain when the diocese was reunited; probably shortly after 775, when George tried to set the church in order after the turbulent reigns of the rebel patriarchs. At Qartmin a Bishop George is attested in 776/7²²¹ and a Bishop Michael in 784/5,²²² both by inscriptions; but whether they were bishops of the abbey alone or of Tur 'Abdin as a whole is not stated.²²³ In any case, by the time the official Register of ordinations opens in 793, there is no separate episcopate of Qartmin.²²⁴

5. Monastic rivalries

The death of Athanasius Sandloyo in 758 was followed by the election of George, a monk of great learning and wisdom – though as yet he was only a deacon – from the

²¹² *Chr. Michael* 1195, xl.22c, p. 466.

²¹³ Pognon, *Inscriptions*, pp. 48, 120–1; Baršawm, *TA*, p. 50.

²¹⁴ See Ch. 1, n. 69. ²¹⁵ *INSCR.* B.1. ²¹⁶ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 213 [Chabot, p. 60].

²¹⁷ *INSCR.* C.2.

²¹⁸ The rise of 'Morutho' is briefly recorded in *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 1074 = *Chr. 'Harran'* 846 AG 1081; there is confusion surrounding his date, since that in the *Chronicle of 819* is written in a later hand, while there is a lacuna in the *Chronicle of 846*.

²¹⁹ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, pp. 282–9 [Chabot, pp. 117–22].

²²⁰ On this and the following, see the Appendix, section L.

²²¹ *INSCR.* A.6. ²²² *INSCR.* A.8.

²²³ Pognon interpreted a phrase in *INSCR.* C.2 as a reference to the 'd'wān' or council of an eighth-century bishop Abraham (*Inscriptions*, pp. 98–9); my grounds for doubting this are given in *OC* (1987), p. 123.

²²⁴ The seventh bishop ordained by Cyriac after his accession in 793 was 'Thomas, bishop for Tur 'Abdin, from the abbey of Qartmin, [ordained] in the same monastery of the Pillar [at Kallinikos]' (*Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xvii.7, p. 753).

abbey of Qenneshre.²²⁵ The patriarchate thus returned to the monastery which had dominated it, with the exception of two reigns, from 591 to 708.²²⁶ That the election of George was seen in terms of monastic rivalries is shown by the rumour to which the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* attributes the desertion of the Mesopotamian bishops, especially the Qartminites, from the synod which met to elect him: George had vowed to erase the very memory of Qartmin Abbey and of the monastery founded by Athanasius Sandloyo from the face of the earth.²²⁷ George himself recalled that Theodore, the bishop of Samosata, with whom he lived as *synkellos*, had prophesied his elevation, adding: 'Give your attention to the abbey where you were educated, for it has become weak'.²²⁸ This remark would seem to refer to the failure of Qenneshre to prevent the successes of Qartmin through the political manoeuvres of Sandloyo. Clearly Qenneshre expected to get some tangible benefit from the election of one of her sons to the apostolic see.

Three of the early patriarchs of the Syrian Orthodox church had close links with the monastery of Gubo-Baroyo between Aleppo and Mabbugh in the region of Cyrrhus, a very fertile and prosperous area: Paul of Beth Ukome and John I were Gubites and Peter of Kallinikos was buried there.²²⁹ Gubo-Baroyo came to the fore again in the eighth century. Elijah (708/9–724) and Athanasius III (724–739/40) were both from this monastery, indeed the latter had been abbot of it.²³⁰ He was ordained at the abbey of Qartmin, which may mean there was already an alliance between these two houses.²³¹ Certainly they acted in concert later in the century and in the early part of the next.

One might conjecture that the alliance between Gubo-Baroyo and Qartmin was struck in the seventh century, when the former may have resented the virtual monopoly of Qenneshre over the patriarchate. With the Persian invasion and the subsequent disappearance of the international frontier on the Tigris, the provinces of the Persian East entered the medley of Syrian Orthodox politics, with the monastery of Mor Matthew in the vanguard. Qartmin seems early to have formed friendships among the 'Persian' monks. We have seen that it probably owed its elevation to the status of an episcopal, even a metropolitan, see to Mor Matthew.²³² In the schism which occurred in the reign of Severus bar Mashqe (667/8–683/4) we find hints of an alliance between the two. The leader of the rebellion, Sergius Zkhunoyo, was not indeed a monk of either, but he was under the influence of Mor Matthew; and the chronicler names Ananias (of Damascus), a monk of Qartmin, as the next most important opponent of

²²⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xl.25c, p. 475; *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 212 [Chabot, p. 61].

²²⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register x, p. 752; Athanasius II spent his youth at Qenneshre: *ibid.*, xl.15c, p. 444.

²²⁷ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 213 [Chabot, pp. 60–1]: 'The name of the man was John; his dwelling was in Shawharto Hfikhto of [Mt] Ayshumo [cf. *L. Daniel*, fol. 99b.1; summary, p. 61 n. 1], since he had spent a long time in the wandering life of spiritual exile [cf. Ch. 3, n. 82] and as one who claimed to know this George, he approached the Mesopotamian bishops and especially those of Qartminite origin and said, "How is it that you intend to make patriarch over yourselves a man who threatened your monastery, saying: If I get authority in the Church, I shall destroy the name of Qartmini [sic] and of the monastery of Athanas from the earth?"'

²²⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xl.25c, p. 475.

²²⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register iii, iv, vii, p. 752.

²³⁰ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xl.19c, pp. 456–7; Register xii, xiii, p. 752.

²³¹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xiii, p. 752; but *Chr. Gregory II*, col. 299 says 'we have found in some MSS that he was from the monastery of Harbaz and was consecrated at Edessa and that the bishop Gabriel laid hands on him'. This variant cannot stand against the double attestation in Michael's *Chronicle* that Athanasius had been abbot of Gubo-Baroyo. ²³² p. 153.

the patriarch.²³³ Throughout the related correspondence the prominence of the monks in the dispute (as opposed to clergy and people) is reiterated.²³⁴ The dispute was about ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and since only monks could become bishops they were plainly far from disinterested in their zeal. The Matthaean, supported by the Qartminites, thus became the chief opponents of the Qenneshrite patriarchs. It was natural that they should join forces with the Gubites, even if their motivation was different.

When the curtain opens on the scene of the mid-eighth-century schism, a number of Qartminite bishops hold the centre of the stage; one would like to know by which patriarchs they were ordained. There is every chance that it was the two Gubites who reigned between 708 and 740. Other Qartminite bishops were ordained between these years, not only in Tur 'Abdin, but also, for instance, at Harran, where Simeon of the Olives was succeeded by his disciple Thomas, from Qartmin. Simeon's biographer wrote that, after his death in 734, every city that wanted a bishop sought one from Qartmin.²³⁵ This exaggeration expresses the pride of a remote abbey, which has begun to make a decisive impact on the world at large through its widespread episcopal representatives.²³⁶

Simeon of the Olives himself was an exceptional Qartminite. Closely allied with the Qenneshrite patriarch Julian, he cooperated with his policy toward the East, which was far from congenial to the Matthaean. It was surely this loyalty which earned him the see of Harran, an influential position in the early Arab period, and which won for Qartmin patriarchal approval of the profit-making arrangements established by Simeon in Nisibis.²³⁷ Moses of Tur 'Abdin wrote approvingly of Simeon, in spite of the fact that his own village, Anhel, seems to have been rather opposed to Qartmin, and although Daniel of Tur 'Abdin, who was probably his son, was clearly biased against the abbey.

The virtual unanimity with which the bishops originally voted for George at Mabbugh was broken at the last minute by the desertion of the Mesopotamian bishops: hardly had they recrossed the Euphrates when they changed their tune and set up John of Kallinikos, a monk of Qarqafto, as a counter-patriarch, although he had stayed to vote for George at Mabbugh; his acceptance, and the initiative of the monasteries in electing him, brought discredit on monks generally. The cities, and even some monas-

²³³ Denis apparently listed Sergius, Ananias and Gabriel of Rish'ayno as the ringleaders: *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.13c, p. 436 with *Chr. 'Edessa'* 1234, ii, pp. 262-3.

²³⁴ See n. 50 above.

²³⁵ *L. Simeon of Olives*, pp. 230-1 [Dolabani, p. 142]; summary, p. 177.

²³⁶ The following eighth-century bishops are known to have sprung from Qartmin, excluding bishops of Tur 'Abdin and of the abbey itself: HARRAN: Simeon (700-34), Thomas (734-7/8), Isaac (752-5, then patriarch until 756/7), Denis (c. 756-61/2); MAYPERQAT: Athanasius (c. 726-56/7, then patriarch until 758); DARA: David (c. 747-61/2, then anti-patriarch until 768/9); SEGESTAN: Cyriac (c. 747-52, then bishop of Hesno d-Kifo and Tur 'Abdin), Gabriel (consecrated c. 750, but never went to Segestan - he became, anomalously, bishop of the abbey of Qartmin); EDESSA: Elijah (769, rejected), Zechariah (784-5/6, then dismissed; again, for the rural districts only, c. 793; died after 797/8).

²³⁷ It was to Harran that Iwannis the patriarch went to meet the caliph Marwan and to offer him the rich presents which he had loaded on fifty camels (*Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.22c, p. 464); for its importance as a centre of power in the early Arab period, see G. Fehérvári, *EI*², iii (1971), p. 228: 'Marwān II made Harrān his residence and the capital of the Umayyad empire.' Patriarchal approval of profits: *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 223 [Dolabani, p. 138]; summary, p. 177.

teries, refused to recognize him.²³⁸ Was it not a Qartminite, David of Dara, who succeeded John after four years and, winning the favour of the caliph al-Manṣūr, had George imprisoned in the newly founded city of Baghdad in 767?²³⁹ But David, by using naked force of arms to impose his authority, an authority which stemmed from the diploma given him by the caliph, not from an open election, alienated the people and even some of the friends of Qartmin.²⁴⁰ Thus the *Chronicle of 846*, normally sympathetic in its attentions to Qartmin, twice characterizes him as 'the evildoer'.²⁴¹ Many of the bishops he ordained were rejected by their dioceses; one of these was Elijah, 'a heartless man without a thought for God', whom David appointed to Edessa in 769, only to see him driven out with abuse. This Elijah was a Qartminite.²⁴²

David's extremism had the result that George was well received throughout the church on his release from gaol in 775.²⁴³ It was a time of universal hardship, the legacy of three or more years of excessive taxation, aggravated by natural disasters and other causes. The general amnesty which freed George was the customary gesture of the new caliph at his accession. George must have reaped some of the goodwill generated by al-Mahdi's decision to arrest the rapacious governor of Mesopotamia, Musa, the son of Muṣ'ab; he was shortly to prove, to the satisfaction of Musa's successor, 'Alī, that he was not one of those prelates whose political methods placed an intolerable financial burden on the lay community.²⁴⁴ The church had had quite enough of them and many rural areas were by this stage scarcely able to pay their taxes, let alone to sustain a hierarchy which fought out its internal battles by bribing the Muslim authorities. Consequently George encountered little resistance to his programme of normalization. He replaced all the bishops ordained by David with other men. In all probability he reunited the diocese of Tur 'Abdin without delay. If the omission of his patriarchal title in an inscription of 784/5 at Qartmin²⁴⁵ may show a residue of ill-feeling (al-Mahdi had forbidden George to use the title, but had not enforced this command), its inclusion in another inscription of the same period at the Monastery of the Cross²⁴⁶ suggests that only the hard core of the opposition had remained bitter. Denis of Tell-Mahre records that George was 'welcomed like an angel of God' in Tagrit, Mossul and everywhere in Mesopotamia.²⁴⁷

In a letter written by George to Deacon Guriyo of Beth Na'ar, near Edessa, we find evidence of the patriarch's statesmanship and good judgement.²⁴⁸ Guriyo had asked for a ruling on the controversial question, whether it was right to use the phrase: 'We break the heavenly bread in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' in celebrating the Eucharist. George replied that there could be no doubt that the phrase, for all its popularity, implied a division of the person of Christ which was

²³⁸ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, pp. 214-17 [Chabot, pp. 61-4]: 'The eastern abbey made John patriarch without the consent of the cities of Mesopotamia, or indeed of any of the abbey; the westerners and the Mossulites consented to George.'

²³⁹ *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 1073; *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.26c, pp. 476-7.

²⁴⁰ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.26c, p. 477; *Chr. Qartmin* 819, AG 1073, 1080.

²⁴¹ *Chr. 'Harran'* 846, AG 1073, 1[080] (supplevi): curiously there is a lacuna in the word in question in each of the two places, but there is no sign on the MS that it was deleted on purpose, nor is there any doubt about the restoration.

²⁴² *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 252 [Chabot, p. 90].

²⁴³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.1c, p. 478.

²⁴⁴ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.1c, p. 479.

²⁴⁵ *INSCR. A.8*; but this omission may be a mistake (see p. 215).

²⁴⁶ *INSCR. B.9*.

²⁴⁷ See n. 243.

²⁴⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.2, pp. 480-2.

heretical: for the bread is called 'heavenly' by virtue of its identity with Christ, so how can it be blessed in Christ's name? Nevertheless, he refused to forbid its use, because he knew that this would give a pretext for trouble-makers to cause another schism. This is exactly what happened in the reign of the next patriarch but one, Cyriac. Abramowski has pointed out that the heretical phrase may be an indication of Nestorian influence on the 'Persian' Syrian Orthodox.²⁴⁹ It was sustained elsewhere, notably at Qartmin and at Gubo-Baroyo, but this can be put down to the fact that it became a kind of badge of the three-cornered monastic alliance described above.

There are some other hints that Qartmin was secretly regarded as being tainted with Nestorianism, at least by her patriarchal opponents. Iwannis accused the 'venerable elder' Sandloyo of keeping several mistresses – and a wife disguised as a nun!²⁵⁰ Much was made of David's Persian bodyguard, and it was claimed that these soldiers forced the faithful to receive communion at David's hands.²⁵¹ Both these accusations allude to the notorious Baršawmo of Nisibis, who had imposed Nestorianism in Persia at the point of the sword and had taken a nun to wife, ruling (in his own interest) that Nestorian bishops must be married.²⁵² Such, at least, was the Syrian Orthodox tradition about him, as recorded in the early seventh century, and it is confirmed in some degree by Nestorian sources.²⁵³ In this connection, the evidence of cultural exchange between Qartmin and the Church of the East in the early eleventh century should be noted.²⁵⁴ It may also be revelant that the Nestorian 'Mor Awgin' cycle of monastic legends had a strong influence at a later date on the way in which the authors of saints' *Lives* in Tur 'Abdin perceived their past.²⁵⁵ This is hardly surprising. Qartmin had sustained a polemical dialogue with the Nestorian monastery of Abraham of Kashkar a few miles away on the southern escarpment of the same plateau in the latter part of the seventh century.²⁵⁶ After the disappearance of the frontier, Nestorian monks seem to have taken over the monastery of Mor Malke in Beth Rishe, the south-eastern part of Tur 'Abdin.²⁵⁷ On the east side, too, the Persian frontier ran quite close to Qartmin and place names from the region between Azakh and the Tigris, Beth

Zabday, are chiefly attested in Nestorian literature.²⁵⁸ Even Simeon of the Olives was rumoured to have taken refuge from episcopal ordination in the monastery of Fenek, on the Nestorian side of the Tigris,²⁵⁹ and contacts between Qartmin and Corduene are already documented in the fifth century.²⁶⁰ The monks of Qartmin would probably have repudiated with indignation any insinuation of Nestorian tendencies, but they could hardly fail to have been affected by their geographical proximity. To judge by the ninth-century Qartminite patriarch, Theodosius Romanus, who translated the doctrinally questionable *Book of Hierotheos*,²⁶¹ the monks of his abbey stood in a tradition of mysticism so abstract and indefinite that it might well have been cultivated in common across the denominational boundary.

No such geographical cause can be adduced for the adoption of the formula by the Gubites, to the west of the Euphrates. This is not an indication of the extent to which Nestorian ideas had penetrated the West-Syrian church, as Abramowski thought.²⁶² The Gubites adopted it simply to share the pretext of their eastern allies for rebelling once more against the patriarch. After the death of George in 790 the synod, swayed (Denis claims) by fear of the rich monastery of Gubo-Baroyo, elected as his successor Joseph, monk of that house.²⁶³ The anti-Qenneshrite party rejoiced and prepared itself for a reign in which they would have their own way – for Joseph was uneducated and not particularly intelligent, so might be easily be controlled by his fellow-monks. Their first setback was Joseph's failure to persuade the Edessenes to take back their bishop Zechariah, a monk of Qartmin Abbey, not to be confused with his predecessor, another Zechariah, who had also been rejected by the diocese and dismissed in 783/4 by the patriarch George.²⁶⁴ The second Zechariah was consecrated by George and dismissed by him in 785/6 as a result of the complaints brought against him by the clergy and the chief laymen of the city.²⁶⁵ As soon as Joseph was consecrated patriarch, this Zechariah persuaded him to go with him to Edessa to reconcile him with his diocese: but the Edessenes would not have him.²⁶⁶ The second reversal for the allies was the sudden death of their figurehead, Joseph, less than a year after his consecration, in the monastery founded by Athanasius Sandloyo above Tell-Beshmay, where Sandloyo himself was buried.²⁶⁷ It is significant that Joseph was visiting one of the powerful houses of the Qartminite party.

Joseph's successor was Cyriac (793–817), from the Monastery of the Pillar at

²⁴⁹ e.g. Awšar, which appears in the *Qartmin Trilogy* alone of West-Syrian literature (xxxix.15, with a significant variant), can be situated by reference to *L. John of Nhel*, section 17 ('the village of Awšar in Beth Zabday'), and *Leg. Pinhes*, p. 216 (between the river Saryo, p. 215 – cf. *Leg. Sowo*, p. 223; *Qartmin Trilogy*, iv.1; Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (1880), p. 24 n. 175 – and the Tigris opposite Fenek). On the nineteenth-century village of Awšar, about a third of the way from Jazirat ibn 'Umar to Azakh, see A. Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 244, according well with the above.

²⁵⁰ *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 227 [Dolabani, p. 141]; summary, p. 177.

²⁵¹ xxii.6–7; xxiii.6; *L. Philoxenos*, fol. 113a (cf. Ch. 4, n. 5).

²⁵² *Book of Hierotheos*, Introduction; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, p. 280. Theodosius' positive opinion of the book was not shared by the patriarch Cyriac (793–817), who made in synod a canonical statement that: 'The book which bears the name of Hierotheos is not his, but seems to be by Stephen bar Šudayli, the heretic' (*Can. Gregory*, p. 105 [Nau, p. 105, No. 199]). It is virtually a work of pantheism.

²⁵³ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 98. ²⁵⁴ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, p. 483.

²⁵⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.1c, p. 479.

²⁵⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.1c, 3c, pp. 480, 482.

²⁵⁷ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, p. 483.

²⁵⁸ *loc. cit.*

²⁴⁹ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 98.

²⁵⁰ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.23c, p. 468; cf. xi.23b, *ibid.* (left column, line 8).

²⁵¹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.26c, p. 477.

²⁵² *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.9c, p. 426.

²⁵³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xi.9, pp. 423–7; Gerō, *Baršawma of Nisibis* (1981), p. 57.

²⁵⁴ Berlin MS Sachau 304 is a glorious illustrated Gospel lectionary, written in Esṯrangelo on parchment by the famous scribe Emmanuel, nephew of bishop John of Qartmin (cf. *Chr. Gregory II*, cols. 417, 419); A. Palmer, *OC* 73 (1989), shows that there is no reason to doubt this attribution, in spite of the fact that the lectionary, as regards its contents, is an East-Syrian book (Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, No. 14, pp. 27–32).

²⁵⁵ *Leg. John of Kfone*, fol. 12: John, an Athenian, saw Mor Awgin in Athens and followed him; after Awgin had lived for many years on Mt Izlo, he sent out his disciples to 'colonize' the East from Nisibis to India. The region above M'are as far as Armenia fell by lot to Malke, Elisha, Isaiah of Aleppo, Busino, Zvino, Moses and our John, who converted Beth Rishe, to the north of Mt Izala, and Beth Moḥallam and Ḥesno d-Kifo and the rest; cf. J.M. Fiey, *Anal. Boll.* 80 (1962), pp. 66–9.

²⁵⁶ Thomas of Margo, II.18, p. 90 [Bedjan, p. 86].

²⁵⁷ That it was originally West-Syrian is suggested by the following facts: that the frontier between Byzantine and Persian territory is most likely to have followed the ridge to the south of Mor Malke; that the ground plan of the ancient church conforms to the West-Syrian type of monastic church, from which the undoubtedly Nestorian churches of Mor Awgin and Mor John the Arab on the south slopes of Izala diverge; that Malke is more prominent in the West-Syrian liturgical calendars than in the East-Syrian.

Kallinikos.²⁶⁸ Denis (818–45) clearly deplored the hot-headedness with which Cyriac reacted to his Gubite opponents and their eastern friends, provoking instead of side-stepping confrontation;²⁶⁹ yet he equally clearly supported his predecessor's policies in principle.²⁷⁰ One of Cyriac's first tasks was to placate the disgruntled Zechariah of Edessa. He travelled with him to the city and had an enthusiastic reception – until he mentioned the matter of Zechariah. Then the Edessenes became stubborn. But Cyriac was able to persuade them to let him have the visiting of four rural districts of the diocese as long as he should live, on condition that they reverted after his death to the bishop of the city.²⁷¹ (It is noteworthy that the idea of dividing a diocese in this way, introduced at Amida by Iwannis for practical reasons against the will of the citizens and perverted by Sandloy in Tur 'Abdin to satisfy two ambitious men at once, had become by Cyriac's time a more acceptable recourse.) Having offered this sop to Zechariah, Cyriac showed his true colours by ordaining for the city itself, with the full consent of the Edessenes, a monk of Qenneshre, named Basil.²⁷² The Edessenes were loyal to Qenneshre and opposed to Qartmin. There had never been strong contacts between Edessa and the latter, whereas we know from the example of Denis of Tell-Mahre that at least one of the aristocratic families of the city was represented in the community at Qenneshre, which, after all, was at no great distance from Edessa.²⁷³ When Zechariah died is uncertain, but he lived to attend a synod concerning the Julianists in Harran in 797/8.²⁷⁴ Probably he was one of the bishops who, having a grudge against Cyriac, caused his courageous attempt to achieve reunification with the Julianist community to fail.²⁷⁵

Having solved this delicate problem successfully, Cyriac thought that he could abolish the heretical phrase about breaking 'the heavenly bread' from the Eucharist.²⁷⁶ He forbade the priests whom he ordained to use it. But, as George had foreseen, the opposition was quick to make an issue of this. At the synod of Beth Botin in 794/5 it was decided, to the dismay of the patriarch, that those who wished should be free to use the formula.²⁷⁷ Cyriac had another serious setback in 797/8, when he failed to bring about a *rapprochement* with the Syrian Julianists, again because of the presence of several enemies among his own bishops.²⁷⁸ Against Severus of Samosata he had successfully appealed to secular authority.²⁷⁹ His policy of direct confrontation had less happy results in the case of Bishop Bacchus of Cyrrhestia, who resided at the monastery of Gubo-Baroyo.²⁸⁰ Cyriac dismissed him after several warnings and Bacchus, bearing his grudge, incited the priests in his region to use the 'heavenly bread' formula. Finally, on his death-bed, he added the solemn injunction that the Cyrrhestians should never accept a bishop unless he was a Gubite. This was not extraordinary: Tur 'Abdin very rarely had a bishop who was not a monk of Qartmin.²⁸¹ But Cyriac found it 'unjust'

²⁶⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xvii, p. 753; also *id.*, xii.3c, p. 484: 'from the monastery of Bizuno'.
²⁶⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, 5c, pp. 484, 488. ²⁷⁰ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, p. 99.

²⁷¹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, p. 484. ²⁷² *loc. cit.*

²⁷³ On the site of Qenneshre, see Yaquut, II, 688, quoted and translated by Duval in F. Nau, *Vie de Jean bar Aphthonia* (Paris, 1902), p. 12. ²⁷⁴ *Chr. Brooks* 813, AG 1109.

²⁷⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.4c, p. 486. ²⁷⁶ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, p. 484. ²⁷⁷ *loc. cit.*

²⁷⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.4c, pp. 485–6. ²⁷⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.3c, p. 484.

²⁸⁰ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.5c, pp. 486f.

²⁸¹ Before the opening of the official Register of ordinations, none are specifically recorded; between 793

that a region be held as the 'legacy' of its inhabitants in this way. He ordained for them instead a monk of the monastery of Jacob of Cyrrhus, named Solomon. This resulted not only in the division of the diocese; but in a general schism. The Cyrrhestians erased the name Cyriac from the diptychs forthwith and a deputation of Gubites and rebel bishops, some of whom had been deposed, was sent to the caliph Harun al-Rashid. Seeing that he was on the point of making war with the Byzantines, they took the line that Cyriac was a Byzantine sympathizer, even a spy, who for this reason had built churches on the Byzantine frontier. This 'information' provoked the caliph to order the destruction of all the churches on the frontier, a command which was executed with excessive zeal in other regions also, such as Antioch and Jerusalem. Cyriac subsequently managed to justify himself to the caliph and 'everyone cursed the Gubites who had caused this disaster'.²⁸² It was only a few years later that the monastery of Qenneshre was itself destroyed by fire; what was left of it was removed afterwards by partisans of the Gubites.²⁸³

All these things were followed by worse disturbances, until at last Cyriac called a synod at Gubrin in Cyrrhestia in 807/8, at which the ringleaders of the Gubite rebellion were anathematized, among them Simeon, a monk of Gubo.²⁸⁴ After the synod, Simeon's brother, Abraham, who was a monk of Qartmin, sought to persuade the patriarch to pardon Simeon; but in the event Abraham also joined the rebellion and became its leader.²⁸⁵ The Gubites made him 'patriarch' and he 'ordained' metropolitans, without provinces, who went about accusing Cyriac of Julianism and stirring up popular support for the symbolic formula concerning the 'heavenly bread'. This led to a general anathema by the patriarch against Abraham of Qartmin 'and all the Gubites'.²⁸⁶ True to historical form, the Matthaean and the Syrian Orthodox of Tagrit joined the ranks of those who opposed the patriarch Cyriac, although their pretext was a different one.²⁸⁷ On this side, also, Cyriac found no solution other than to anathematize the Matthaean and their bishops. The courtesy was reciprocated. Things were no better when Cyriac died in 817.

Such was the inheritance of Denis of Tell-Mahre, as Cyriac's successor in the patriarchate:²⁸⁸ a church in schism on every side, with an anti-patriarch of the utmost duplicity. With Abraham (whom he calls 'Abiram', after the priest who rebelled against Moses), Denis wrestled and argued and treated for many years. He defeated him finally, having won the Gubites to his side. Abraham died in 837, the last of the great Qartminite rebels, and Denis quickly put a stop to the attempt which was made to make his brother Simeon anti-patriarch in his stead. With patience and skill, and with liberal recourse to secular power as guarantor of his authority, Denis restored order in his church and kept it united under his governorship. But, writing the epilogue to his Chronicle shortly before his death in 845, he saw only black clouds on the horizon.²⁸⁹

and 1089, of 17 bishops of Tur 'Abdin only Severus of Tell 'Eda (Register xxviii.4: 962) and John Zakay of the monastery of 'Abed (Register xxxii.12: 1032–42) are explicitly said to have come from elsewhere and John (Register xxix.8: 965–85) is of uncertain provenance. ²⁸² *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.5c, p. 490.

²⁸³ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.6b, p. 491. ²⁸⁴ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.6c, pp. 491–2.

²⁸⁵ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.6c, p. 492. ²⁸⁶ *loc. cit.* ²⁸⁷ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.7c, pp. 492f.

²⁸⁸ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.9, p. 500. ²⁸⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii.21, pp. 538f.

6

The springs run dry: Spiritual and economic exhaustion

Denis of Tell-Mahre was haunted by the spectre of the decadence of his West-Syrian community.¹ He was proud of his achievement in harnessing the indocile elements under him to the yoke of his authority, with the guarantee of secular power behind it. Yet he was weary of the laborious and humiliating performances that were necessary to retain the support of the caliph and his agents. Somehow, the very sweetness of his rhetorical success, when al-Ma'mun received him in 828 alone in his orchard at Baghdad, was mingled with aloes, because it was won at the expense of his pride as a Christian.

Compromise was necessary at every turn. It no longer seemed possible to be unbending in defence of a single truth, like the saints of old. Perhaps this is why the hagiographical compositions of the ninth and following centuries take on an air of unreality. They had a totally different function from those of earlier times.

No-one can mistake the earnest spiritual engagement of the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* or of Elijah's biography of John of Tella. These are, in the first place, examples of moral courage and Christian charity, presented with an immediacy which challenges the reader to an active response.² Already the *Lives* of Athanasius 'the Camel-driver' and of his brother Severus, in the early seventh century, and the *Life* of Theodotos, the latter's disciple, bear the imprint of a significant shift: humility, courage, mortification and charity are still unmistakably real in them, but there is a strong vein of superstition there as well.³ Devils become like savage but cowed dogs, at the beck and call of wicked magicians and of holy men alike. The holy man no longer rests all his hope in Christ, he distributes it among a myriad of saints and relics, whose power he uses at will, like a white magician. The correspondence of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) shows that relics were commonly believed to have a power of their own incompatible with that of Christ, and even Christ's power was situated firmly in the consecrated host.⁴

John of Ephesus (d. 586) had been free of this exaggerated emphasis on relics, as had

his contemporaries. For them, it had been much more important to encounter a living holy man, whom they could try to follow in the Way of Truth. Theodotos (d. 698) was a transitional phenomenon: his charisma resided not in himself alone, but in the sack of bones which he carried about with him. Simeon of the Olives (d. 734) represents the final stage in the transition: his miracles and his sanctity, his bouts as a recluse or as 'stylite', seem a mere hagiographical formality, while the serious purpose of his life is to build up his monastery and his own village by political dexterity and economic investment.

Thereafter, the hagiographies produced in our area cease to find their subject among contemporaries or in the recent past. The plague of 774 caused the monks of Qartmin to appeal, not to any living holy man, but to Gabriel of Beth Qustan, who had been buried 126 years previously (xc1.4; cf. p. 157). The lament of the chronicler of Zuqin in 775 knows no bounds. It was nothing new to find the cause for natural and political disaster in the sinfulness of the victims; but the catalogue of moral degradation with which this writer substantiates his arguments shows a disgust with humanity verging on the loss of faith in Christian salvation.

In those times the most obvious motives for entering the monastic life were material well-being and political opportunity. The monks were the foremost activists in the power struggle within the Syrian Orthodox community. Even a hermit of long standing left his ruin on the dry foothills of Ayshumo to poison the minds of the Mesopotamian bishops against George, whom they had already agreed to consecrate as patriarch; and this was done in the spirit of monastic rivalry.⁵ In the schism which followed, the monasteries brought themselves into disrepute by recreating the old 'rival hierarchy' which had existed outside the cities in the years of Chalcedonian persecution.⁶ If an occasional 'remnant of sanctity' was found in a cave or in a monastery, he resolutely refused to become a bishop; if compelled, he insisted on remaining a recluse and delegating his duties.⁷ No wonder, then, that those who did become bishops in this period left a record of cynicism and self-interest.

The monks had abandoned their stance outside society, the position from which they had once been able to act as regulators and as mediators, respected by the rich and powerful but open to the appeals of the oppressed. They were now themselves the oppressors and went hand-in-glove with the rulers and the landowners to exploit the people. Where a defender of the people and a denouncer of the bishops did appear, he found no monastic hagiographer. On the contrary, his ascetic character was assassinated by the monks who wrote about him and his whole career was so blackened in the records that we cannot guess the real character of the prophet. Yet after he had been imprisoned by the anti-patriarch David, the deacon (and rejected monk) Morutho attracted a vast following.⁸

It is from the onset of this age, when the socially active holy man was ignored or calumniated by the guardians of literacy, that we should date the more legendary hagiographies of the West-Syrians. The *Qartmin Trilogy* and the *Life of Aaron of Serugh*, different though they are in respect of their composition, may be regarded as

¹ Abramowski, *Dionysius*, (1940), pp. 114-21.

² Susan Ashbrook Harvey, doctoral thesis, Birmingham 1982.

³ L. Athanasius: *Chr. Michael* 1195, xl.7c, pp. 417-21 (Denis of Tell-Mahre found the demonology of the *Life of Severus* troubling); A. Palmer, in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 229 (1987), pp. 203-16.

⁴ *Can. W.-Syr.*, i, p. 265 (Nos. [37], [38]) [Nau, p. 47 (Nos. 20, 21)].

⁵ *Chr. Zuqin* 775, p. 213 [Chabot, pp. 60-1], translated in Ch. 5, n. 227.

⁶ *Chr. Zuqin* 775, p. 214, 249 [Chabot, pp. 61, 88].

⁷ *Chr. Zuqin* 775, p. 218f [Chabot, pp. 64f]. ⁸ *Chr. Zuqin* 775, p. 282f [Chabot, pp. 116f].

two examples of hagiography serving the purpose of a monastic charter.⁹ The *Life of Aaron* is fiction from start to finish, but it won for the monastery which produced it general recognition of a fourth-century origin and of a spurious benefaction by the emperor Constantine.¹⁰

Qartmin, as it happened, really did possess such a history, which may even have inspired the *Life of Aaron* and the *Life of Malke*; yet the author who put together the *Trilog*y saw his task as that of surrounding the great Qartminites of the past with an aura of fairy-tale enchantment and seductive prose, so that the stories would go down well and be remembered. It is no accident that the most fictional of the three, the *Life of Gabriel*, was the most effective in this way.

The unreality of the spiritual content of the *Trilog*y is most evident where a spiritual purpose is most earnestly counterfeited: in the sermon which the author appends to the Catalogue of Holy Men (xxiv. 13–xxvi. 18). Clearly the Qartminites of the ninth and tenth century had little idea of the motivation of their forefathers and regarded them as a race apart, untouchable in sanctity. Perhaps this is why their own quest for sanctity took such a distorted shape. The *Book of Hierotheos*, translated by Theodosius 'the Roman', the most eminent Qartminite of his time, appealed to a mystic sensibility almost severed from the roots of Christian tradition, which leaned towards pantheism.¹¹ A century earlier another patriarch, Cyriac, had condemned this book in a synodical canon as heretical.¹²

Beginning in 785 and covering the whole of the ninth century, the patriarchal canons preserved in the West-Syrian '*Synodicon*' and in the *Nomocanon* of Gregory Barhebraeus highlight the features of this period.¹³ Earlier canons have not survived for comparison; it would be unsound to suppose that abuses first attested here had not been committed before. But the obsessiveness with which the synods return to those 'rebellious abbots who form parties in opposition to their bishop', to the 'abbots, stylites and recluses who send out letters of anathema', and to the 'bishops who change their see and act beyond their powers and against other bishops'¹⁴ smacks of a serious *malaise*, which the chronicles regard as having become chronic about the mid-eighth century.

Denis of Tell-Mahre's canons, which were adopted by the synod of Kallinikos in August 818 (not October 817), are prefaced with some clear references to the rebel monasteries and their rival hierarchy, and to the unholy alliance made between the rebels and 'outsiders' (Muslims) against their legitimate patriarch.¹⁵ It is 'a time more

⁹ cf. *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207: 'There are many monasteries which have lost the stories of the saints under whose patronage they were built, such as Mor Behnam, who... works wonders... yet he has no story at all, except it be a tale passed on by word of mouth, as it pleases the one who is relating his story to add to it or to omit parts from it. For this reason, we have recorded these monasteries [sc. restored by John of Mardin in the twelfth century], and the origin of their buildings and the names of the saints on whose relics they are built, although what is really needed is for each to have his own story written for him.'

¹⁰ A. Palmer, *OC* 70 (1986), pp. 61–4.

¹¹ Marsh, in *Book of Hierotheos*; this book was recopied at Qartmin as late as 1364 (Wright, *MSS London*, No. DCCCL, i.d. pp. 893f).

¹² *Can. Gregory*, p. 105 [Nau, p. 105 (No. 199)].

¹³ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 1f; *Can. Gregory*, *passim* [Nau, pt. III].

¹⁴ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 2–3 (No. 1), 11 (Nos. 17, 18); yet similar canons are found concerning stylites and abbots among the pronouncements of Jacob of Edessa and George of the Arabs, c. 700: *Can. Gregory*, pp. 112, 113 [Nau, p. 75 (No. 117) and p. 94 (No. 100)].

¹⁵ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 25f. with false date.

troubled than any other, when disobedience is rife and love and faith have all but disappeared'. The first four canons are directed against rogue bishops and those who have recourse to 'foreigners outside the court of the Church', or the Christians in secular authority, to circumvent the jurisdiction of their bishop. Many other canons condemn secularization and assimilation in its various forms (such as circumcision). The eleventh canon denounces 'conspiracies and wicked covenants entered into by distinguished clergy and abbots for private ends'. These disorders are familiar from the history of the later eighth century; they continued throughout the ninth.

The final canon of Denis should be quoted in full. It attests certain changes which surely affected Tur 'Abdin.

When the synod considered the circumstances of this time, and that many monks, overtaken by the necessity of the time, have left their holy dwellings and the inhabitation of monasteries and abbeys which are, for the most part, remote from the cities (since the saints took pains and made every effort to live in the mountains and in the deserts, and established them with an intention far removed from the world) and have been forced by compelling circumstances to live in monasteries around the cities and even, occasionally, in the cities themselves and in villages, it did not seem right to the synod, in view of the disturbance and necessity of the time, to issue any dominical command against them at all, although they would be more benefited by living the solitary life, utterly distanced from the world. Nevertheless, we have all determined by dominical decree that no monk shall live anywhere in the city or in the region of a bishop without that bishop's will and permission. Then, when those who are worthy and above suspicion live there, let them not be seen to exalt themselves in any way at all in any matter which pertains to the community and is the concern of the bishop alone. The testimony of only two persons shall be sufficient ground for the expulsion of anyone apprehended in such misdemeanours, because he will have shown himself a presumptuous trouble-maker with no respect for the dignified habit of monasticism which he wears.¹⁶

Tur 'Abdin was just such a remote area, where 'the saints' had chosen to found their monasteries. Note the mythical quality of the saints for the ninth-century writer, who must imagine either an age without crises or a kind of man impervious to them. The hypocritical regrets are, at best, mere nostalgia.

Whatever the nature of the 'compelling circumstances', they would have lacked no force on the sparsely watered plateau of Tur 'Abdin. Many monks will have followed the general drift of the agrarian population towards the cities as a result of a system of taxation which had been working to the severe disadvantage of the remoter regions since the third quarter of the eighth century.¹⁷ Perhaps, also, the rise of local dynasts, such as 'Isa ibn al-Shaykh, in the ninth century added to the insecurity of the countryside, especially for non-Muslims, who prospered better under a strong central government.¹⁸

Shortly after 793, when he became a bishop, a monk of Kallinikos, called Ananias, refounded the Saffron Monastery, near his appointed city of Mardin, in a well-watered position with fertile lands and cliffs to north and east, ideally suited to hermits.¹⁹ The

¹⁶ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, pp. 33–4 (No. 12).

¹⁷ C. Cahen, *Arabica* 1 (1954), pp. 136–52.

¹⁸ M. Canard, *EI* 4 (1978), pp. 88–91. (I am grateful to Dr H. Kennedy for this suggestion).

¹⁹ *Chr. Michael* 1195, xii. 5b, pp. 488–9 (from the lost *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Dnāhiso', xi. 17); *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207 corrects Michael's assertion that Ananias was a monk of Mor Matthew.

success and perhaps the motive of this foundation was not unconnected with the general movement of monks towards the cities. Dnahisho, a Nestorian author, stated that Ananias bought 'a castle, built in hewn stone in Roman times' and made a monastery there, but John of Mardin (d. 1165) was right to say it must have been a monastery before.²⁰ A fortress would not have needed a House of Saints and two or more churches. For all that Dnahisho's attributions to Ananias the construction of 'a church and a sanctuary', the great church and the church of St Mary must be dated to the sixth century.²¹

Ananias' initiative occurred at a time when the evidence of building in Tur 'Abdin, relatively abundant since 683, dries up completely for a whole century. This extraordinary gap can best be displayed in the form of a chart (Table 2). New monasteries, but no new churches, to our knowledge, were built under the Arabs.²² We may assume that all the village churches of Tur 'Abdin are built on the foundations of pre-Arab buildings. Recent textual, archaeological and ethnographical researches have enabled us to plot more than fifty settlements with churches on the map of Tur 'Abdin.²³ The *Life of Gabriel* seems to put the figure at 243 (LXXXVII.12), but whether Tur 'Abdin alone is meant, or the region between the Tigris and the Harbo, is left in doubt. Many of the old churches of Tur 'Abdin were restored or rebuilt in the eighth century. Saints' *Lives* and *Chronicles* preserve the memory that certain monastic buildings were destroyed in the last great Roman-Persian wars.²⁴ In some cases this will have occurred in the villages, too; in others, the early churches will have been constructed in such a way as to leave room for drastic improvements by the relatively prosperous Tur'abdinians of the mid-eighth century.

No such reconstruction is better documented than that of the conventual church near Salah, in the monastery of Jacob the Recluse. We now possess eight inscriptions of c.753, all but one of which were hitherto unpublished.²⁵ Their interpretation is certain to be a matter of lively debate. Especially interesting is a list of the foremost villagers of Salah, each with the sum he donated towards the construction of the church.²⁶ Certain market prices are given for the region of Amida during the same quarter-century by the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.²⁷ From these we can estimate that the total sum donated by the villagers was, under normal conditions, equivalent to more than 200 cows. How much it cost to build such a church I do not know; but there are indications that the village was not the only source of revenue. For one thing, the inscription begins by asking God to reward 'all those who contributed... especially those from this village'. Then again, the abbot in his person as a villager ('the son of Sergius') only contributed the equivalent of one cow; yet his name, along with those of two deacons and certain other persons, was prominently displayed in other inscriptions.²⁸ This may indicate that his abbey, a

considerable landowner by the account of its foundation legend,²⁹ itself contributed the greatest single amount.

What was the relationship between monastery and village which prompted such a cooperative venture? It was surely one of economic interdependence. To judge by the *Life of Jacob*, it is not unlikely that the monastery owned the village. No remains of a church in the village have been reported, but even if Salah had always looked to its monastery for spiritual care, it is hard to believe that this church, which has a monastic design, was built to be shared by monks and villagers together with women and children. More probably, the village church has disappeared and the communal effort which produced the fine monastic oratory reflects not the needs, but the economic inferiority of the laymen.

Not all of them were poor, however. Seven, at least, were in a position to donate the equivalent of ten to thirty cows each. These, for all their piety, must surely have belonged to that class of exploitative landowners, whose profile takes such an ugly form in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.³⁰ Such men were made responsible for the taxes of their dependents, so that, in times of excessive taxation, many independent smallholders 'took refuge' in effectual serfdom.³¹ Occasionally the tables were turned, as when tax-officials were persuaded to take the whole required amount from the great landowners, inasmuch as the ordinary farmers had already been bled white by them.³² It is certainly important to note the gap between the rich (with at least ten cows to give away) and the richest of the poor, who could afford four at the most, with one uncertain exception.

How the individual landowners of Salah were related economically to the monastery cannot be explained by reference to local sources alone. The question as to the latter's taxability is unsatisfactorily answered by the literature on the subject.³³ The *Life of Theodosios* shows that the monastery of Mor Sergius d-Faihyo in Claudia owed 'the tribute of ten men' according to a register held by the tax-collector, and that the governor of Dara promised to pay the tribute of the monastery of Mor Abay near Qelch out of his own pocket, implying that a specific amount was required.³⁴ On the other hand, Muslim lawyers were not unanimous concerning Muhammad's exemption of monks from the *jizya*;³⁵ and the census of c.770, implied by the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* to have been the first general census of monastic property, seems to show that monasteries had previously been exempt from the land-tax.³⁶

The builders of the church near Salah apparently called it a 'renovation', whereas it was clearly no less than a total reconstruction.³⁷ This may reflect their anxiety concerning the Islamic law against new churches. But it was certainly permitted to construct new monasteries containing churches.³⁸ Indeed, this may explain the proliferation of tiny monasteries close to the villages of Tur 'Abdin during the Middle Ages:

²⁰ *Can. W-Syr.*, II, p. 207.

²¹ M.C. Mundell, *Actes XVe congr. byz.*, II (Athens, 1981), pp. 511-28.

²² *L. Theodoros*, fol. 66b.3-67a.2: monastery founded c.690 above Qelch. *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 210 [Chabot, pp. 58]. monastery founded in first half of eighth century above Tell-Beshmay.

²³ Wiesner, *Kulibauern* I and II; Anschütz, *Die syrischen Christen vom Tur 'Abdin* (1984).

²⁴ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 66b.3; *L. Simeon of Olives*, p. 210 [Doiabani, p. 130], summary, p. 175; *Chr. Qurtamin* 819, AG 891.

²⁵ *INSCR.*, B.1-8. ²⁶ *INSCR.*, B.3. ²⁷ *INSCR.*, B.1-7.

²⁸ *L. Jacob*, fol. 181a.1-2; summary, p. 12. ²⁹ C. Cahen, *Arabica* I (1954), pp. 148f.

³⁰ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 310 [Chabot, p. 138]; C. Cahen, *Arabica* I (1954), pp. 149-50.

³¹ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 330-1 [Chabot, p. 130].

³² Tritton, *Non-Muslims*, Ch. 3; Fattal, *Le Statut légal des non-musulmans* (1958), pp. 270f.

³³ *L. Theodoros*, fol. 61a.2, b.2; 61b.1. ³⁴ Fattal, *loc. cit.*

³⁵ *Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 259f [Chabot, pp. 96f]. ³⁶ *INSCR.*, B.1.

³⁷ See n. 22 above. The monastery of Theodoros contained a temple of the Mother of God; that of Ananias, according to Dnahisho, was provided with a new church and sanctuary; *INSCR.*, A.2 records the construction of a new temple of the Mother of God in 739/40 in the monastery of Mor John, near Hah.

instead of vowing to build a new church in their village, the people would vow to build a monastery with an oratory. A relative or two might be spared to form the monastic 'community'.³⁹

Much of the church building which took place during the ninth century elsewhere in Mesopotamia was occasioned by the destruction of old churches, with or without orders of the caliph.⁴⁰ A blow from which the remoteness of Tur 'Abdin seems to have protected its inhabitants. One might, therefore, argue that the lack of specific evidence there of further building after the 790s and before the 890s (provided that it is not the result of the chance preservation only of earlier and later inscriptions and texts) may simply mean that the buildings constructed in the eighth century and before did not yet need to be renewed.

Yet, given that the depopulation of the remoter mountain areas was a generally recognized fact in 818, the silence of all records as to building activity in Tur 'Abdin during the ninth century does seem to signify a certain decline in prosperity. The anarchy of that century, in a region with no reserves of natural advantage, would have hindered recovery, after the cumulative ravages of extortion, disaster and plague which were recorded in the 770s. The abbey of Qartmin, having investments in Nisibis and elsewhere,⁴¹ was more resilient than the villages (perhaps, also, it exploited or, at least, failed to protect the villagers). Witness the continuation of work on a massive stone kneading-rough for the kitchens at Qartmin:⁴² it was quarried in Beth Debeh in 768/9 and work was probably interrupted during the critical period, to be resumed and completed in 776/7.

Apparently the community was still numerous and wealthy, in spite of the loss of nearly 100 monks in the plague.⁴³ In 785 a new winepress was built at the abbey and, probably about the same time, the charnel-house was extended, two further signs of prosperity and strength.⁴⁴ The monastery of Mor Lazarus near Habsenus, founded by Simeon of the Olives and closely allied with Qartmin, was able in 791/2 to erect a remarkable pillar-tower in hewn stone, for eremitical use.⁴⁵ This speaks of a wealth at variance with the presumed poverty of the villagers in Tur 'Abdin on the eve of the crisis evoked by the last of Denis' canons.

The resilience of Qartmin carried her through into the ninth century, producing fifteen bishops for various sees between 793 and 845⁴⁶ and seven bishops between 846 and 896,⁴⁷ as well as the patriarch Theodosius (887-96), who was buried at the abbey and constructed some buildings there.⁴⁸ In the following half-century she produced eight bishops⁴⁹ and, from 954 to 1003, six or seven more⁵⁰ and another patriarch, Denis

³⁹ Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (1911), p. 304; the smaller monasteries around Beth Svirina could not have held more than two monks.

⁴⁰ Chr. Michael 1195, xii.56, pp. 489-90.

⁴¹ See p. 163; the possession of the mill outside the walls of Nisibis will have passed to the government c.770 (Chr. Zughin 775, p. 266 [Chabot, p. 103]), but its use may have been retained by the abbey (C. Cahen, *Arabica* 1 (1934), p. 139 n. 4).

⁴² INSCR. A.6.

⁴³ Chr. Zughin 775, p. 368 [Chabot, p. 186].

⁴⁴ INSCR. A.8, C.10.

⁴⁵ Chr. Michael 1195, Register xvii.7, 12, 25, 44, 78, 79, 81; xviii.14, 21, 33, 34, 39, 40, 82, 89, pp. 753-5.

⁴⁶ Chr. Michael 1195, Register xix.10, 18, 26; xx.16; xxi.5, 14, 17, pp. 755-7.

⁴⁷ Chr. Michael 1195, xiii.26, p. 549; Register xxi.1, p. 757; INSCR. B.11.

⁴⁸ Chr. Michael 1195, Register xxii.19; xxiii.20, 22; xxiv.11; xxv.1, 10, 13, 42, pp. 757-9.

⁴⁹ Chr. Michael 1195, Register xxvii.4; xxix.87, 18, 31, xxx.7, 22, 26, pp. 760-1.

⁵⁰ Chr. Michael 1195, Register xxvii.4; xxix.87, 18, 31, xxx.7, 22, 26, pp. 760-1.

III (957-61), who was buried at Qartmin in the tomb of Theodosius.⁵¹ If the 'Persian' (i.e. Nestorian) canon adopted formally by the Syrian Orthodox church in the thirteenth century simply ratified, as seems likely, a state of affairs already long established by custom, these patriarchal inmates of the House of Saints elevated the monastery above the jurisdiction of any metropolitan bishop: only a patriarch could give orders to a house where a patriarch was entombed.⁵² Either this dignity, or the fact that it enjoyed the rank of an episcopal see, allowed Qartmin to call itself a 'sacerdotal abbey': *'amro kohnoyo*.⁵³

Learning did not die out entirely in Tur 'Abdin: the books read in the library at Qartmin during the ninth and tenth centuries are known in part from the analysis of the *Chronicle of 819* and of the *Qartmin Trilogy*. The former uses the *Chronicle of Edessa* (540); the latter quotes letters of Philoxenos and adapts John of Ephesus' *Church History* and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, as well as the *Chronicle of Zughin*, Greek manuscripts from the sixth and the late seventh centuries containing scriptural and secular texts (Homer, Euclid and so on) were washed clean and overwritten in Syriac with works by Severus of Antioch some time between 768 and 825 at Qartmin;⁵⁴ whether or not this proves that Greek had once been studied there, we may at least infer that it was no longer part of the curriculum in the ninth century. Theodosius 'the Roman' owed his surname to his knowledge of Greek; but he did not learn it at Qartmin.⁵⁵ It was perhaps he who, having read the name 'to *Rhabdios*' vel *sim*, in a Greek author, adopted a different spelling for Tur 'Abdin (namely, 'Tur 'Abdin', with OΛΑΦ), in order to derive it from the Greek.⁵⁶

Theodosius was learned by the standards of his time; but how did he come to translate the *Book of Hierotheos*, which had been condemned as heretical by another Syrian Orthodox patriarch a hundred years previously? The truth is that the bishops had been far from unanimous in their choice of Theodosius as a leader. After four years of anarchy caused by the lack of a suitable candidate for the patriarchate, they had resorted to lots. Theodosius' name was drawn at random from a list of twelve candidates.⁵⁷ It is symptomatic of the decline of this church that it did not find another intelligent chronicler after Denis, until Ignatius of Melitene (d. 1094)⁵⁸ and he was much inferior.

By the end of the ninth century, parchment had become so scarce that even the Gospels were no longer written out in the ancient Estrangelo; that script was judged too wasteful of space.⁵⁹ In the tenth century, parchment gave way to paper altogether. It was left to Bishop John of Tur 'Abdin around the year 1000 to set in motion a revival of the ancient scribal arts, which owed not a little to the prosperous initiative of the Syrian Orthodox settlers around Melitene.⁶⁰ Tur 'Abdin then appears to have experienced a

⁵¹ Chr. Michael 1195, xiii.30, p. 551; Register xxvii, p. 760.

⁵² Can. Gregory, p. 114 [Nau, p. 99 (No. 137)]; cf. Kaunholtz, *Gabriel van Bagra* (1976), pp. 52-4.

⁵³ cf. [P.] P. Martin, *JA* (1869), p. 356.

⁵⁴ Br. Lib. Add. MSS 17,210 and 17,211; Wright, *MSS London*, pp. 548-50 (No. DCXXVII).

⁵⁵ Baunastark, *Geschichte*, p. 280.

⁵⁶ Chr. Michael 1195, xiii.26, p. 549.

⁵⁷ Chabot, *Introduction au Chronique de Michel le Syrien* (1923), p. xxxiv.

⁵⁸ Land, *Anekdota Syriaca*, I, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Chr. Gregory II, cols. 417, 419.

temporary access of cultural activity. But between the early ninth and tenth centuries, that plateau, together with the whole of the Syrian Orthodox church, was in eclipse.⁶¹ In retrospect, the eighth century, for all its moral degradation, must have seemed a Silver Age. Monuments of the 'Golden Age' also survive in Tur 'Abdin, but the bulk of the fine Christian architecture which has been the focus of European interest in the region reflects the glow of that Indian summer between the Arab conquest and the ninth-century disintegration of the caliphate.

⁶¹ Baunzark, *Geschichte*, p. 275; there is little trace of historical development in the consensuous, but static and undifferentiated, study by Nabe-von Schönborg, *Die westsyrische Kirche im Mittelalter* (800-1130) (1976), the rigid framework of which (like that of Hage's *Jakobitische Kirche*) seems designed to exclude it.

Table 1. *Chronological table of events concerning Tur 'Abdin before AD 800*

(All dates are of the Christian era)

348-350	Constantius fortifies, in successive years, Amida, Tella and Tur 'Abdin
363	Jovian cedes Nisibis and the Transtigritane Provinces to the Persians after the death of Julian in Mesopotamia
396/7	Traditional foundation date of Qartmin Abbey, marking the benefaction of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius
409	Arcadius' successor, Theodosius II, reaffirms his predecessor's policy by making an important benefaction to Qartmin Abbey
c. 410	Death of Samuel, of Eshtin village, founder of Qartmin Abbey, on 15 May
433	Death of Simeon, of Qartmin village, disciple of Samuel and second abbot of Qartmin Abbey, on 19 January
421	Death of Jacob the Recluse, founder of the monastery near Şalah
439	Death of Daniel, founder of the monastery on Mt Aghlosh, who is succeeded by his son and disciple, Lazarus
443/4	Burial vault of Qartmin Abbey emptied; 483 skulls, including that of the Founder, are placed in the charnel-house
483/4	John Sa'oro of Qartmin Abbey is made bishop of Amida; he builds a church and a bridge over the Tigris with imperial funds
502/3	Death of John Sa'oro shortly before the fatal Persian siege of Amida
505-7	Expansion and fortification of the village of Dara, which is named Anastasioupolis
512	Completion of a church and a baptistery at Qartmin Abbey with imperial funds, the architects being Theodore and Theodosius
c. 560	Several years of heavy hail destroy the agricultural livelihood of the people of Tur 'Abdin; temporary emigration to plain
567	John, abbot of Qartmin, successfully opposes reconciliation with Justin II over the issue of Chalcedon; shortly afterwards, he becomes unofficial Syrian Orthodox bishop of Dara
Nov. 573	Fall of Dara to the Persians
Jul. 578	Death of Bishop John of Dara, formerly abbot of Qartmin, with Jacob Baradaeus, bishop of Edessa, in Egypt
581	Raid by the Persians in Tur 'Abdin; Qartmin Abbey is sacked and burned
604/5	The Castle of Tur 'Abdin (to Rhabdios) is taken by the Persians
614/15	Daniel 'Uzoyo, abbot of Qartmin, becomes, by the intervention of the metropolitan of Mossul, bishop of the metropolitan diocese of Dara, which is extended to include Tella; he resides at Qartmin Abbey
Dec. 633	Death of Daniel 'Uzoyo
May 634	Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan succeeds Daniel as bishop of Dara and abbot of Qartmin, where he had previously been <i>rish ahe</i>
639	The Arabs conquer Tur 'Abdin, establishing a Melkite as governor

- Dec. 648 Death of Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan, as bishop of Tur 'Abdin; Bishop Sisinnius of Dara was among those attending his funeral
- 667-680 Reign of the patriarch Severus bar Mashqe, during which Ananias, metropolitan bishop of Damascus and a monk of Qartmin, is prominent among the monks and bishops in opposition to the patriarchal policy of centralized authority
- c. 700 *fl.* Moses of Tur 'Abdin, *to be identified with* Moses of Anḫel, a historian contemporary with Simeon 'of the Olives'
- 700 Simeon 'of the Olives', founder of the latter-day fortunes of Qartmin Abbey, becomes bishop of Ḥarran
- 706/7 Consecration by the patriarch Julian of the Syrian Orthodox church of Mor Theodore, built by Simeon of Ḥarran with funds from Qartmin Abbey in the largely Nestorian city of Nisibis; the work-force was provided by George, the son of Lazarus, *Melkite* governor of Tur 'Abdin, resident in Anḫel
- 718/19 Athanasius, of Nunib village, becomes abbot of Qartmin, *probably succeeding* Lazarus, who, in the face of opposition headed by Gabriel of Anḫel, became bishop of Tur 'Abdin after the death of Bishop John
- 726 Simeon of Ḥarran and Athanasius of Mayerqaṭ, both of Qartmin, are among the five Syrian bishops at the synod of Mantzikert
- Jun. 734 Death of Simeon of Ḥarran; his disciple, Thomas, also a monk of Qartmin, becomes bishop of Ḥarran after him
- 735/6 Thomas of Ḥarran and Lazarus of Tur 'Abdin present at a synod in Arbin Abbey
- 737/8 Death of Thomas of Ḥarran
- 740 Synodical election by lot, under the unanimously chosen supervision of Athanasius of Mayerqaṭ, of the patriarch Iwannis
- 742/3 The title 'Metropolitan of Mesopotamia (Jazira)' recorded for Athanasius of Mayerqaṭ (= Athanasius Sandloyo)
- 743/4 Athanasius, of Nunib village, becomes bishop of Tur 'Abdin
- 746/7 Death of Athanasius, of Nunib village; the succession is disputed for several years between Gabriel, abbot of Qartmin, Cyriac, bishop of Segestan, a monk of Qartmin, Denis, another monk of Qartmin, and Abay, bishop of Arzon
- c. 748/9 Patriarch Iwannis slights Athanasius of Mayerqaṭ by his appointment of Abay of Arzon to the see of Amida over the head of Athanasius' protégé, Isiah of Ashparin
- 752 Athanasius is confirmed as metropolitan of *greater* Mesopotamia by a synod at Tella; he appoints Isaac, a monk of Qartmin, bishop of Ḥarran and Cyriac of Segestan bishop of Tur 'Abdin and Hesno d-Kifo, making Gabriel abbot-bishop of Qartmin *and its territory*; in Mayerqaṭ he builds a cathedral
- 755 Death of Patriarch Iwannis; the caliph's authority is used by a party of bishops to secure the election of Isaac of Ḥarran
- c. 755 Daniel, son of Moses of Tur 'Abdin and maternal grandfather of Denis of Tell-Maḥre, writes anecdotal history of the church
- 756 Death of Patriarch Isaac; he is succeeded by Athanasius of Mayerqaṭ
- 758 Sudden death at Ḥarran of Patriarch Athanasius; the election of George, a monk of Qenneshre, leads to the secession of the Qartminites and their allies, who set up John of Kallinikos as a counter-patriarch
- 762 Death in Baghdad of Denis of Ḥarran, monk of Qartmin and former bishop-elect of Tur 'Abdin
- 767 Patriarch George imprisoned at Baghdad; his place is taken by John of Kallinikos, and after his death by David of Dara, a monk of Qartmin, both 'anti-patriarchs' with caliphal authority
- 769 Elijah, monk of Qartmin, appointed by David to the see of Edessa; he is driven out with abuse by the people of the city
- 774 The plague strikes Tur 'Abdin, killing 95 monks at Qartmin Abbey and many at the Monastery of the Cross; exhumation of Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan 'about 130 years' after his death; his right hand is taken to Ḥaḥ to ward off the plague there
- 775 Patriarch George released from prison; *reunification of diocese of Tur 'Abdin*
- 776/7 Bishop George of Tur 'Abdin attested at Qartmin Abbey
- 784 Zechariah, monk of Qartmin, appointed by George to the see of Edessa but dismissed in the following year for misconduct
- 784/5 Bishop Michael of Tur 'Abdin attested at Qartmin Abbey
- before 790 Bishop S[ovo] of Tur 'Abdin attested at the Monastery of the Cross
- 790 Death of Patriarch George; he is succeeded in 791 by Joseph, a monk of Gubo-Baroyo, monastic confederate of Qartmin Abbey
- 792 Death of Patriarch Joseph; he is succeeded in 793 by Cyriac, of the Monastery of the Pillar at Kallinikos, who will alienate the Gubites and the Qartminites and their confederates, the monks of Mor Matthew at Mossul, thus provoking the schism marked by disagreement over the 'heavenly bread' formula in the liturgy and the 'anti-patriarchate' of Abraham, a monk of Qartmin
- 793 Zechariah of Edessa partially reinstated, as Rural Visitor; Basil, a monk of Qenneshre, appointed bishop of the city
- 797/8 Synod at Ḥarran, designed to cement union with the 'Julianists', is sabotaged by the enemies of patriarch Cyriac, amongst whom is Zechariah of Edessa

Note: Figures and words in italic script derive from inference and are not explicitly attested in the sources.

Table 2. *Recorded building in Mt Masius (Tur 'Abdin to Mt Aghlosh) before 1200; dates simplified (e.g. 772 = 771/2)*
 (oratory = *beth şlutho*; burial vault = *beth qadishe*; conventual church = *hayklo*; church = *'idto*)

879 BC	Victory stele set up at Matiate (Midyat) with inscription and portrait of Assurnasirpal II	(Kessler, <i>Untersuchungen</i>)
AD 350	Castles of Hesno d-Kifo / Kephaz and Tur 'Abdin / to Rhabdios (-ion)	(S, J)
395 +	Qartmin enlarged by imperial benefaction, with church, vault, dome and cisterns	(Q)
409 +	Second imperial benefaction, with church, burial vault, sepulchre, chapel and 'conventual church'	(Q)
439 -	Conventual church in stone at monastery of Mor Daniel on Mount Aghlosh, built with money collected in the 'West'	(Da)
507	Fortification of Dara completed	(Chr. Amida 569, Procopius, <i>Buildings</i>)
512	Conventual church (and baptistery?) at Qartmin, by imperial benefaction	(Q)
527-65	Refortification of Tur 'Abdin and the rest of Mt Masius under Justinian I (527-65)	(Procopius, <i>Buildings</i>)
683	Castle of Tur 'Abdin rebuilt by the governors of the region, Abraham and Lazarus	(S)
696	Monastery founded above that of Mor Abay near Qeeth, with burial vault and conventual church	(T)
700 ±	Several buildings at Qartmin, at Habsenus and at the monastery of Mor Lazarus, near the latter village	(S)
700 +	Portico at Qartmin by benefaction of the daughter of the Melkite governor of Dara	(C.1)
740	Conventual church in the monastery (?) of Mor John at Hah	(A.2)
750 ±	Monastery founded above Tell-Beshmay	(Chr. Zuqnin 775, Chr. Qartmin 819)
753 ±	Church (conventual church?) in monastery of Mor Jacob of Şalah rebuilt ('renewed')	(B.1-8)
758	Antechamber of burial vaults at Qartmin (formerly 'House of the Apostles') renovated	(A.3)
762	Templon-screen of church of Mor Cyriac at Arnas, giving latest possible date for the church itself	(C.2)
772	Church of Mor Addai and adjoining oratory at Heshterek	(A.5)
775-90	Burial vault at the Monastery of the Cross in Beth El	(B.9)
777	Installation in the domed octagon at Qartmin (formerly the baptistery) of stone kneading-trough, quarried in 769	(A.6)
779 -	Church of St Stephen at Kfarbe, as may be inferred from an inscription on it	(A.7)
785	Winepress and (?) extension to the charnel-house at Qartmin	(A.8, C.10)
789?	Conventual church of the monastery of Sts Sergius and Bacchus at Hah, giving the date of the monastery?	(B.10)
792	Hermit's column in the monastery of Mor Lazarus near Habsenus	(A.9)
793 +	Saffron Monastery (Dêr ez-Za'farân) near Mardin (re-?) founded (Dnaḥisho', in Chr. Michael 1195; Can. W-Syr.)	
800-1000	Minor, undated work at Qartmin and at Beth Svirina; also, perhaps, in Qartmin village	(C.3-13)
895 ±	Non-liturgical complex at Qartmin, by patriarchal initiative with the bishop of Tur 'Abdin	(B.11)
932 -	Church of Mor Dimeṭ at Zaz	(A.11)
935	Oratory adjoining church of Mor Azazael at Kfarze, giving the latest possible date for the church itself	(A.12)
962	Column in monastery of Mor Michael at Mardin, giving the latest possible date for the monastery itself	(A.13)
989	Stone grids installed in the windows of the conventual church of Qartmin	(A.14)
1033 ±	Unidentified building (library?) at Qartmin	(B.12)
1034	Burial vault and chapel of Mor Aḥo at the Monastery of the Cross in Beth El renovated	(A.15)
1085	Unidentified building at the monastery of Mor Moses near Kfarze, giving the latest possible date for the Monastery	(A.16)
1125 -	Arcade opposite entrance to conventual church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus at Hah	(D.11)
1136 -	Oratory adjoining the church of Mor Sovo at Hah	(Inscr. P 65, checked by Palmer)
1125-65	Many buildings, churches, monasteries etc. restored around Mardin by bishop John of that city	(Can. W-Syr.)
1173 -	Burial vault of monastery of Mor Moses near Kfarze	(A.17)
1167 +	Numerous buildings at Beth Svirina, Qartmin and elsewhere in Tur 'Abdin, including two inns	(Book of Life)
1189	Unidentified chamber at Qartmin	(A.18)
1199	Church of Mor Dodho at Beth Svirina and its yard renovated, vaulted building and cistern added	(A.19)

Abbreviations: A, B, C, D = *INSCR.* A, B, C, D

Da = *L. Daniel*

J = *L. Jacob*

Q = building records incorporated in the *Qartmin Trilogy*

Qartmin = Qartmin Abbey

S = *L. Simeon of Olives*

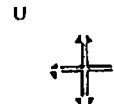
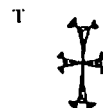
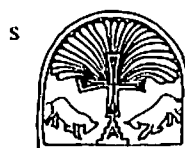
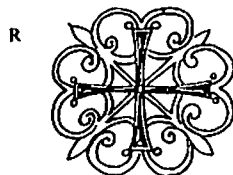
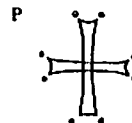
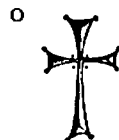
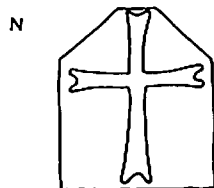
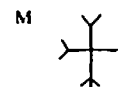
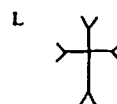
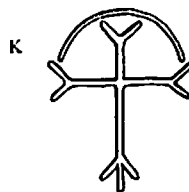
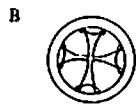
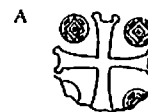
T = *L. Theodotos*

Table 3. *Comparison of the catalogue of holy men in the Life of Samuel with corresponding commemorations in the Calendar of Tur 'Abdin*

Summary of section 12 of <i>Life of Samuel</i>	Corresponding entries in <i>Calendar of Tur 'Abdin</i>
1 Cyrus b. Šufnoye (cursed a lioness)	Dec. 14 <i>Cyrus the Young, abbot of Qartmin</i>
2 Abraham b. Šawroye (cleansed a leper)	(Dec. 30 Abraham the scholar) cf. Aug. 2: Gamaliel
3 Abay (spoke with angel on Mt Sinai)	Nov. 18 <i>Abay of Hah, abbot of Qartmin</i>
4 Simeon (cured a blind man in front of Khusro)	Jan. 11 <i>Simeon of Fafu, abbot of Qartmin</i>
5 John b. Gamaliel (healed a cripple)	(Jan. 23 <i>Abbas John</i> ; + cf. Aug. 2: Gamaliel)
6 Abel, stylite (visited by Mor Akhsnoyo)	Aug. 7 <i>Mor Abel, for eye-disease and paralysis</i>
7 Stephen (converted pagans on plain)	Mar. 19 <i>Stephen, abbot [of Qartmin]</i>
8 Maron (baptized 2,000 in Gozarto d-Shu'o)	Jun. 20 <i>Maron of Aynwardo, abbot</i>
9 Daniel (walked over Tigris to Corduene)	Dec. 11 <i>Daniel of the Pillar</i>
10 Cyrus the elder (healed bone of a camel)	Nov. 10 <i>Abbot Cyrus</i>
11 John (predicted destruction)	(May 1 <i>Mor John of Kafana</i>)
12 Tuthael, stylite (resurrected a corpse)	Aug. 12 <i>Tuthael the stylite, who resurrected a corpse</i>
13 Zufo (protected men in a collapsing building)	—
14 Daniel, bishop (approved by heavenly voice)	Dec. 9 <i>Mor Daniel, bishop of Qartmin</i>
15 Simeon (revealed the true mother of a child)	(Apr. 27 <i>Simeon, son of Joseph</i>)
16 Simeon (revealed a murderer)	(Aug. 12 <i>Mor Simeon</i>)
17 Matthew, recluse (visited Chrysostom in exile)	Jul. 11 <i>Mor Matthew</i>
18 Jacob, seer (went to Ephesus to condemn Nestorius)	Apr. 20 <i>Mor Jacob</i>
19 George } (martyrs)	Nov. 3 <i>George, martyr</i>
20 Sergius }	—
21 Thomas }	—
22 Stephen } (changed water into oil)	—
23 Michael (made a barren woman fertile)	May 1 <i>Mor Michael and his sister, of the monastery outside Mardin</i>
24 Aḥudhemeh }	—
25 Abraham } (caused a source of water to appear)	(cf. No. 2)
26 Jovinian (cursed a harlot)	—
27 Simeon the Greek (had a company of fifty)	Nov. 18 <i>Simeon the Greek</i>
28 'Ammi (martyred in Tanezin)	Sept. 30 <i>Mor 'Ammi, Bishop of Tur 'Abdin, martyred in Tanezi</i>
29 Lazarus (martyred by Persian sword)	Aug. 3 <i>Lazarus, confessor</i>
30 John of Kallinikos (doused cultic fire)	(Mar. 27 <i>John</i>)
31 Severus the Short (destroyed cultic tree)	Jan. 29 <i>Severus of Kfarso, abbot of Qartmin</i>
32 John Psaltes (had vision of relics at Harbath Tutho)	Dec. 13 <i>John Psaltes</i> (cf. Dec. 12: relics of Harbtho d-Tutho)
33 Talyo (called down fire on a house of idols)	Feb. 1 <i>Mor Talyo</i>
34 Athanasius (baptized all the Jews in vicinity)	—
35 Theodosius (martyred in lime-kiln)	Nov. 26 <i>Theodosius the bishop, martyred in a lime-kiln</i>
36 Elijah (abstained from cooked food)	—
37 Bar-ḥadh-b-shabo (healed the eye of a child)	Mar. 8 <i>Bar-ḥadh-b-shabo</i> /Apr. 10: <i>Mor Bar-ḥadh-b-shabo</i>
38 Šufanyo (loved quiet and solitude)	Apr. 29 <i>Šufanyo, abbot of Qartmin</i>
39 Abraham (vowed not to speak)	(cf. No. 2)
40 Aḥo [bishop] of Arzon (converted (by) Armenians)	Jan 28 <i>Mor Aḥo, bishop of Arzon</i>
41 Šlivo (made rain fall)	—
42 Joshua (stopped infant mortality in Mayperqa)	—
43 Moses (sang with angels)	—
44 Job (outfaced savage lion)	—
45 Gabriel (escorted by angels from his death-bed)	Dec. 23 <i>Death of Mor Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan</i>
46 Joseph (in irons from childhood)	Mar. 1 <i>Joseph</i>
47 Simeon (in cave until death)	(Sept. 18 <i>Mor Simeon</i>)
48 John (pleased his Lord)	(Aug. 21 <i>Mor John</i>)
49 Timothy (ate only dry pulses)	Jan. 22 <i>Timothy</i>
50 Ananias (exorcized demon from girl)	Nov. 21 <i>Mor Ananias</i>
51 Isaac (caused demons to flee)	—
52 Gregory (caused demons to flee)	—
53 Constantine (converted an evil rich man)	—

Note: Identifications made with certainty are italicized in the right-hand column.

Fig. 48. Crosses on stone from Țur 'Abdin and its environs. A. Church of Mor Sovo, Hah; B. Octagon at Viranşehir; C. Detail of inscription A.2, showing vandalism of cross; D. Vault of conventual church of Mor Jacob, Şalah (painted); E, F. South façade of the same church (after C. Preusser); G. Frieze on inner west wall of the same church; H. Panel, in which the cross has been vandalised, on west side of conventual church of Sis Sergius and Bacchus, Hah; I. Lintel stone in ruins north of church of Mor Jacob, Şalah; J, K. Qartmin; L. Arcosolium of burial-chamber, monastery of Mor Theodotos, Qeeth; M, N, O. Qartmin; P. Qartmin village; Q. Qartmin; R. Capital from monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, now at Qartmin; S, T. Qartmin: the stone bearing *INSCR.* A.18; U. On jamb of church of Mor Stephen, Kfarbe



Appendix: The early inscriptions of ʿTur ʿAbdin

A. Introduction

Epigraphy is a fascinating study. To encounter a stone, a brick, a vault, an arch, a cornice, a wall or a doorway on which ancient letters are inscribed is like finding a meteor, a palpable messenger from heaven. The meteor is consumed by heat on its trajectory through the atmosphere, but enough is left of its mineral components to make it valuable to the scientist. The inscriptions of which I speak can be deciphered, in whole or in part, in spite of the erosion of many centuries. But for the unlettered an inscription from ancient times is an object of awe; it is often believed to contain the power of healing, or else an evil power, set on it perhaps to guard some treasure which it hides. The most ancient Syriac inscription of ʿTur ʿAbdin was surrounded with rocks and covered with branches by the Kurds, who call it 'the stone of help', and bring their sickly children to it; but it has also been broken in two and the text has been disfigured by a gunshot (fig. 49).

Who formed the writing on the monuments of ʿTur ʿAbdin and how? What prompted them to do so and what did they (or did they not) commemorate? Why were their conventions so different from those of Greco-Roman epigraphy? Did they have models outside the realm of epigraphy for their craft and for their style and, if so, what does that signify? These are some of the general questions which I shall attempt to answer in the course of this survey, not systematically, but incidentally and cumulatively.

There is room here for particular questions, too. Individual commentaries on the inscriptions make up for the brevity of the references to them in the foregoing chapters. The use of epigraphic records in historical enquiry is not unproblematical, nor is a text engraved on stone always contemporary with the event it commemorates. Moreover, the stonemason himself can introduce errors characteristic of his craft. The laconic, unemotional 'definitiveness' of most memorials obscures their subjectivity. What they omit can also be important.

In several ways this survey goes beyond the scope of the narrative to which it is appended. Most obviously, it gives sporadic insights into the Dark Age of ʿTur ʿAbdin, between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries, when the only other sources are registers of episcopal ordinations, jottings in the *Book of Life*, occasional brief references in chronicles and the testimony of surviving manuscripts and their scribes. Again, the source-conditioned emphasis on monastic life and particularly on the monastery of Qartmin and its *alumni* finds a necessary counterpoise in the inscriptions in the villages of ʿTur ʿAbdin.

For anyone interested in the archaeology of ʿTur ʿAbdin, these inscriptions, many of which have never been studied before, are of great value. I have tried to make it possible for the reader without any knowledge of Syriac to form a judgement in questions relating to inscriptions. The

translations given here are literal and preserve as far as possible not the word order but the grammatical structure of the original. Square brackets indicate where a damaged area has been restored without the help of traces on the stone, or else left blank. Uncertain readings and restorations are printed in italics. Round brackets are used for extra words and comments added by me.

B. A.1¹ and the 'tablet' as an epigraphic setting

Although it antedates the other Syriac inscriptions of ʿTur ʿAbdin by nearly two hundred years, A.1 (fig. 49) does not stand in an epigraphic vacuum. It was found at Qartmin Abbey, which had contacts with the centre of the Byzantine world in the early sixth century; there is even a fragment of a Greek mosaic inscription in the conventual church built by order of the emperor Anastasius and finished in 512. The *stêlē* and the *tabula ansata* which form the setting of A.1 are modelled on those of the Hellenistic world. The round arch above the text contained a relief sculpture which is another sign of this influence. No other *stêlē* and no other sculptures are found in the setting of the later inscriptions of ʿTur ʿAbdin. Yet the *tabula ansata* provides an apparent link with those inscriptions: B.1 (fig. 50), of the mid-eighth century, is also set on a raised 'tablet' with 'handles', though it differs from A.1 in its proportions and in having a serrated edge. Many other inscriptions are framed by a plain rectangular incision or a zig-zag line in relief (cf. fig. 51), to which is often added a single 'handle' (rather than two, as in A.1 and, presumably, B.1), below, above, to the right, or to the left (fig. 52).

The flexibility of this model suggests that the masons were not following a convention of which the origin had been forgotten, but actually had in mind the schoolboy's hand-held exercise tablet. Indeed, 'tablet' seems to have been a technical term for the rectangular setting of a normal inscription in ʿTur ʿAbdin, whether or not the text was on a raised plaque or framed by an incision (cf. B.3, *Inscr.* P 35, 115).

The only certainty about the contents of A.1 is that it was neither an epitaph nor a building memorial. Since nearly all the inscriptions of ʿTur ʿAbdin fall into one or other of these categories, this alone makes it exceptional. It describes the escape, from an unidentified danger, of a number of priests on one day specified in February, March, April, May or August of the year 534 (cf. pp. 145-6):

A.1 On the fourth day [of (month) of the year] eight hundred and forty-five, in the days of M[or] Seve[r]us Karyo, the abbot, the priest [Isaiah [...]] and Mor Maron [...]] and [...], priest and so'uro escaped [...].

The only abbot of Qartmin commemorated in the *Calendar of ʿTur ʿAbdin* whose name can be made to fit the traces is Severus Karyo (the cognomen means 'the Short'). On the title *so'uro*, see Chapter 3, n. 117.

C. C.1 as the trigger of a fashion for building-memorials?

After A.1 there is an interval of just over two centuries before the next dated inscription. But the undated C.1, a laconic building record, may be earlier, since Elusṭriya can be identified as a governor of Dara who was alive in the 690s (see p. 167):

C.1 Patricia, the daughter of Elusṭriya, made this portico.

Like A.1, this inscription is at Qartmin Abbey, though not in its original position (cf. p. 224). Everything in it speaks of Greco-Roman culture: the names, which are derived from Byzantine

¹ This form of reference, equivalent to *INSCR.* A.1, refers to the Corpus published in *OC* 71 (1987).



Fig. 49. *INSCR. A.1* of AD 534, the oldest Syriac inscription yet found in Tur Abdin (Photo: Berni Larsson)

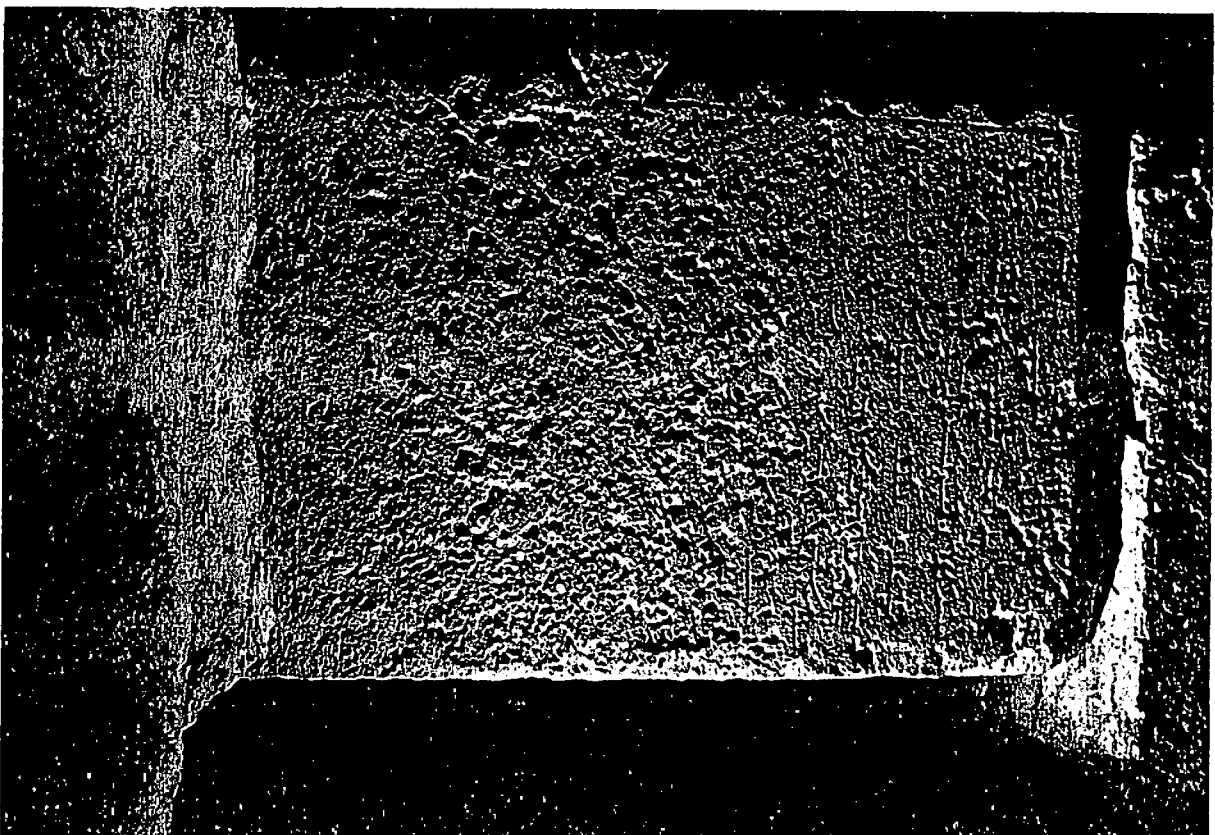


Fig. 50. *INSCR. B.1*, which dates the church at the monastery of Mor Jacob the Recluse, near Salih, to the 750s AD

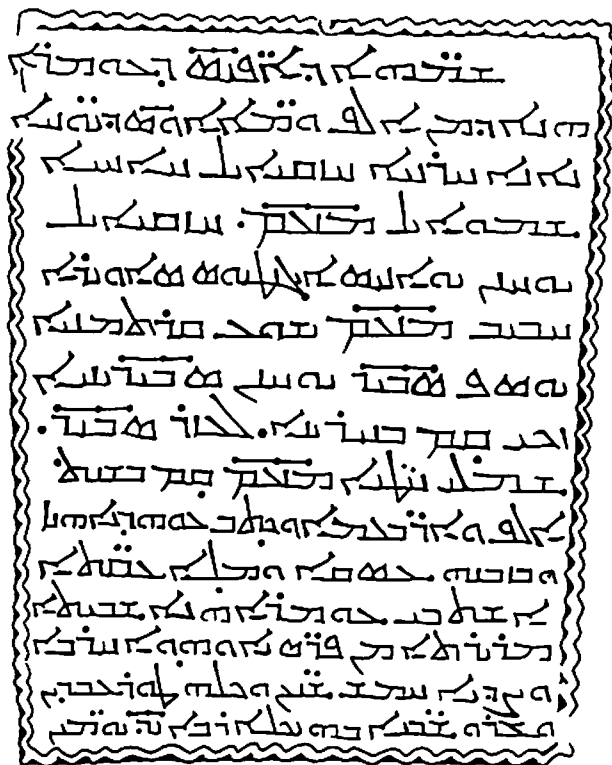


Fig. 51. INSCR. B.13 of c.1105, commemorating the Seljuk raid on Qartmin in 1100

court titulature; the fact that the donation was made by an aristocratic woman; even the nature of her donation (it is not an accident that Syriac has no native word for 'portico'). The very habit of writing such records on stone may have been Byzantine rather than Syrian until C.1 set the fashion in Tur 'Abdin. For suddenly, in the eighth century, a large number of inscriptions, mostly building records, appear in the region.

Several of these inscriptions use passive verbs: 'it was built', 'it was renovated', 'it was raised'; but a large number, perhaps following C.1, use the active verb 'he made'. In C.1 this means 'funded'; but in A.6, for example, the only source of funds who is mentioned is the bishop, George, and that Zechariah of 'Aynwardo 'made' the stone slab in question must mean that he quarried and prepared it or supervised that work. (Perhaps Zechariah was a stone-mason himself, like his brother Cyril, who expertly chiselled the inscription.) A.8 shows how the verb could be used to cover the various ways in which an abbot and his financial officers, together with three architects(?), participated in the erection of a winepress. Elsewhere, the subject of the verb seems to be merely the figure-head of the community; B.11 records that the reigning patriarch of Antioch and the reigning bishop of Tur 'Abdin 'made' a non-liturgical complex of rooms at Qartmin Abbey.

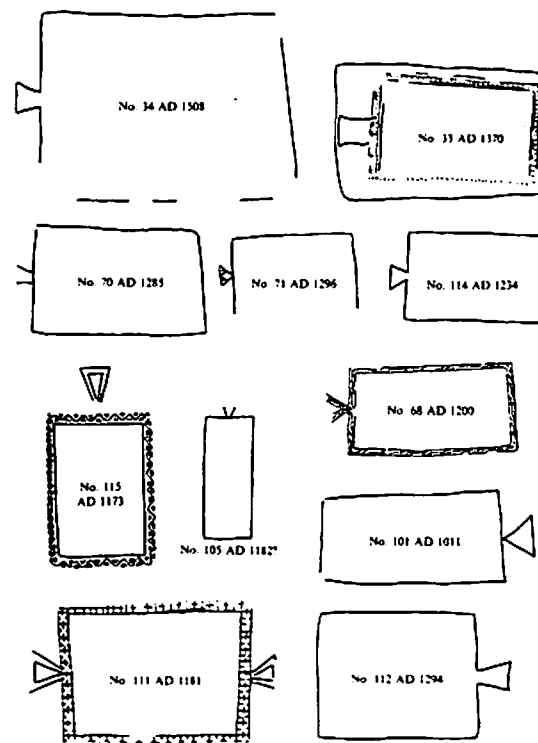


Fig. 52. Inscription frames with handles from Tur 'Abdin, dated 1011-1508 (after H. Pognon). The writing on each runs vertically

D. A.2 and the dating formulas used in the inscriptions

On the first reading, A.2 might appear to use the verb, 'he made' in a literal sense. It is coupled with a verb meaning 'he attended to it' (the superfluous words 'and by the attentiveness' at the end were perhaps left for reasons of visual symmetry, regardless of the sense, while what followed them was carefully erased, probably because it reduplicated the beginning in error). It is emphasized that 'no one helped him'; and the words 'from his work' also help to produce the impression that the donor built the church by a single-handed effort. However, it is more likely that the words 'from his work' refer to the source of the funds donated and we should probably understand the verbs 'help' and 'attend to' in financial terms, as, elsewhere in the inscriptions, we should understand the word 'care'. The inscription is dated 739/40; it surrounds an ornate sanctuary entrance in the ruined monastery (?) of Mor John, near Hah:

A.2 G.... attended to it and made this temple of the House of the Mother of [G]od [...] from his work [...] and no one helped him; so may God, for whose Name's sake he made it, make him worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven and [pardon] his departed ones in the year one thousand and fifty-one of Alexander, in the days of the holy Mor Athanasius†, patriarch, and the venerable Mor Lazarus†, bishop, and by [the] attentiveness [...].†

The synchronism with the reigning Syrian Orthodox patriarch of Antioch ('patriarch' is to be understood in this sense in Tur 'Abdin) and with the bishop of Tur 'Abdin allow the date to be completed (cf. p. 159). Sometimes, like the author of C.1, the subject, or subjects, of inscriptions suppose that their name, or names, alone will be sufficient to date the event for posterity (e.g. B.11). The vital coordinates, however, are the patriarch and the bishop; B.9 adds the abbot and three of his monastic officers and B.12 mentions the Head of the Brothers. More often such synchronisms are preceded (as in A.2) by a date in the Seleucid era, variously referred to as 'the year of Alexander', 'the year of Greeks', 'the year of the blessed Greeks' (D.11 and D.12, dated 1125 and 1126), 'the year in that (i.e. the reckoning) of the Greeks' or 'the year of Greece'. Sometimes (as in A.1) the Seleucid date is given but the era is not named. In A.11 and A.13 'the year of the Arab(s)' refers to the date after the Hijra in the Islamic lunar reckoning: a significant aberration from the norm.

A.16 is the only inscription which places the date *after* the synchronism. Elsewhere the date comes first, then the formula 'in the days of X', where X is the abbot, the patriarch plus the bishop, or the bishop plus the village rector. C.2 has the formula twice, once before the patriarch's name and once before that of the bishop, which helps to pinpoint an interpolation; another variation will be seen below, in B.1.

E. B.1-8: a village contributes to the cost of a monastic church

B.1 (fig. 50) is of great importance for the history of architecture. It was discovered in 1984 in the conventual church of the monastery of Mor Jacob at Šalaḥ by the Reverend Stephen Roundell Palmer, whose mountaineering skill enabled B.5-8 to be recorded. The date is fixed by the synchronism of patriarch and bishop between c.752 and 755; a tentative restoration, from B.8, of the last digit would give June 753 as the exact date:

- B.1 This [church] was renovated [in the] month of June of the year one thousand and sixty-four of Alexander, in the days of our blessed patriarch Mor Yohannis and [our] venerable bishop Mor Cyriac and in the days of Mor Theophilus, [ab]bot of this abbey and Simeon [the son of] Sergius, the so'uro; the administrator was Daniel [...]

The last seven lines are too much eroded to yield more than a few isolated characters. This uneven erosion helps to confirm that B.1 was originally in the wall above the western doorway in the south façade, where a cornice protected the upper part of it from the rain (see Garsoian *et al.*, eds., *East of Byzantium* (1982), pl. 31). It was removed and placed in the south chamber of the sanctuary as the support of an altar, no doubt in the hope of preventing further erosion. The right side of the inscription was chipped away in the process of loosening the block from its place in the wall.

The name of the abbot Theophilus appears again, painted on one of the voussoirs of the northern bracing arch in the vault over the nave:

- B.2 Theophilus, abbot.

Not far from this is another painted inscription, or *dipinto*, which may also have contained the abbot's name. It is above the entrance to the sanctuary and directly below the first brickwork of the vault, on one of the blocks of the uppermost stone course in the east wall of the nave:

- B.3 May the Lord be the Giver of good rewards to every individual who has had a part and has given a blessed gift in this House, and especially to those who are from this village, whose names are written on this tablet: Sovo, the son of Elijah: 130 (zūzē); Daniel, the son of Aḥo: 120 zūzē; Sergius, the son of Peter: 150; Gabriel, the son of Lazarus: 150; Aḥo, the son of Elijah: 100; Gabriel, the son of ... 50; Shayno, the son of Athanasius: 100; John, the son of Sergius: 60 (or 30); Qafuno Hayay: 20; ... the smith: 15; Lazarus, the son of ... 10; Qusino: 10; Jacob, the son of Elisha: 10; [Jo]b, the

son of the priest: 5; [Rube], the so[n of ...]: 6; Simeon, the son of Zuḥo: 10; Abraham, the son of Zuḥo: 10 zūzē; Lazarus, the son of [...]: 5; [Theophilus, the ab]bot, the son of Sergius: 5; Iyot, the son of Matthew: 6; Jesse, the so[n of ...]: 5; G... the son of Jo[h]n: 8; Elijah: 5; Elisha: 10; Joshua, the son of ... 15; Abo, the son of Elijah: 4; Aḥo, the cobbler: 5; and there are some who (gave) one (zūzē) each; and may God bless every one who participated in it.

The historical importance of this inscription is evaluated on pp. 186-7; it gives us a unique cross-section of a village society, the members of which were surely eager to obtain a place in the list by a donation commensurate with their means. It is no surprise to find that the money was in the hands of the menfolk; we may assume that the two sons of Elijah in the upper bracket of wealth were brothers and the same applies to the two sons of Zuḥo in the middle bracket; the smith was three times as wealthy as the cobbler.

This inscription throws up several other problems: Why is the son of the priest mentioned, but not the priest? Why is the abbot listed here as a villager with only a modest sum against his name? Why did the villagers club together to build a church in the monastery instead of building one which their wives and children could use in the village?

There is another *dipinto* on the vault of the western antechamber:

- B.4 I, the deacon Abrahā[m]

The rest of the inscriptions on this church are engraved in the stone of the north façade: B.5 along the horizontal cornice on the west side; B.6 and B.7 in the eastern part of the triangular pediment; B.8 above B.5 in the western part of the same:

- B.5 I, Joshua, the deacon, the son of the priest, pray for me!
B.6 (Insufficiently preserved to be usefully represented in translation)
B.7 [I, Theophilus, [ab]bot, and] I, [Joshua], the deacon, from the same abbey, who exerted ourselves in (building) this House [...]
B.8 [...] and four [...] in the days of our venerable and h[oly] bishop [Mor Cyriac...] this [...] and every one who participated in it, whether in word or in deed, may God give him a good reward, by [the prayers] of all the saints, for ever and ev[er].

The letter-forms of B.1-8 are sufficiently alike to sustain the hypothesis that all these inscriptions are contemporary. B.5-8 showed traces of the paint which had been used to pick them out: it was the same burnt sienna colour as that used in B.2-4 and in the decoration of the vaults and of the tympanum over the sanctuary entrance. No doubt B.1 was also picked out in this colour. It was certainly intended to be easily read and to stand out from the wall, attracting the attention of anyone entering the church through the doorway beneath. The long rectangular blocks of which the church is constructed are laid horizontally: but that on which B.1 is engraved stood vertically across two courses and the text was on a raised tablet with a serrated edge, which would have cast an unusual shadow.

If the first line of B.1 had been totally obliterated, it would have been easy to suppose that it recorded the construction rather than the 'renovation' of the church. The distinctive position of the block bearing B.1 in the south wall rules out the possibility that the inscription is later than the construction of the wall. Yet there is a seamless integrity in the structure of the whole church, with the exception of some obviously recent additions to the roof and to the antechamber and a partial restoration of the central portion of the south façade. We are driven to the conclusion that the so-called 'renovation' was nothing less than a full-scale reconstruction; the old church was not renewed but replaced. The inscriptions on the vaults and on the high northern pediment were made while the original scaffolding was in place.²

² The church of Mor Azazel ('Zozoyel') at Kfarze has projecting blocks in the north and west façades in a regular pattern of horizontal and diagonal alignments and at equal intervals, like the knots in a fishing-net (see Bell/Mango, *TA*, pls. 152-4). These were used to secure the scaffolding during construction; they were

Why were B.5-8 placed on the north façade, where people entering the church would not see them? Why were B.3, B.7 and B.8 written so small and so high that they could not be read from the ground with the naked eye? Why were B.5 and B.1 written horizontally in contrast to the others, which are vertical? The first question may be partially answered by the fact that the ruins of several monastic buildings are on the north side of the church (including, perhaps, those of hostels: Chapter 3, n. 207). The second may indicate that publicity was not the motive of commemoration in these inscriptions; they were intended more for the eye of God, a lasting register of the good deeds of the participants. This interpretation is supported by the absence of appeals to the human reader for his prayers in B.3, B.7 and B.8; B.5, on the other hand, which does contain such an appeal, and B.1, which was definitely intended as a public statement, are orientated horizontally because that made them easier to read. We shall come back to this later.

The discovery of this unparalleled group of interconnected inscriptions puts an end to speculation about the date of this jewel of a church, which has been frequently described and is well illustrated in published photographs, drawings and plans (see the bibliography in Bell/Mango, *T.A.* p. 147; Hill *et al.*, *Catalogue of the Gertrude Bell Photographic Archive* (1982), pp. 87 and 113, give 'mid-Byzantine?' and '14th C.' as dates for this church).

F. A.3: an ambitious abbot's memorial in moulded plaster

Bishop Cyriac, who is named in B.1, was a monk of Qartmin. He was at variance with another deacon of this abbey, the monk Gabriel: both desired to succeed Athanasius of Nubia as bishop of Tur Abdin at his death in 747 (see pp. 168-74). The diocese was eventually divided between them. A.3 shows that Gabriel remained abbot of Qartmin while adopting the episcopal title, 'Abbas'; the 'small part' of Tur Abdin which was designated as his diocese probably coincided with the possessions of the abbey. The Seleucid date corresponds to AD 757/8.

A.3 Abbas Mor Gabriel, the abbot, made this *qlur* house in the year one thousand and sixty-nine. The building in question is the antechamber to the burial vaults at Qartmin Abbey, a building which incorporates two arches from a ruin on this site. Nonetheless, Gabriel is not stated to have restored, but to have 'made' the chamber. The text is displayed in an original way: it is moulded in the plaster of the vault. Such plaster-moulded records become frequent after A.3, first at Qartmin (B.11, C.5, C.7-11) and then in the region of Tur Abdin. The lay-out of A.3, however, is unique: instead of expecting the reader to find the 'top' of the inscription and to work 'down' the vault, lowering his head with every line, the author placed the first line where it would be encountered first by the eye travelling upwards and the second line above it and so forth. There are even traces of a mirror-image of the text moulded in left-to-right Syriac on the other side of the vault.

G. A.4 and C.2: the earliest epigraphs?

The first epigraph connected with this region, perhaps the first Christian epigraph in Syriac, was brought from a church in Amida to Rome, where it is now kept in the Museo Pio Cristiano in the Vatican. It is painted in a cursive and somewhat careless script against a white background on a brick tile:

not needed above the level of the windows in the west façade, because, when the builders reached that height, they could lay beams through the apertures and lash inner and outer scaffolds together. There are corresponding projections for the inner scaffold on the west wall; the north wall of the nave incorporates piers which would have helped to secure the scaffold there. If this system was in general use in Tur Abdin, the tall-tile projections were elsewhere removed.

A.4 In the year one thousand and seventy-one of Alexander (760/1), the priest and rector Elijah made (day) of that month, Mort Mary, daughter of Lazarus the son of Petruno, and daughter of Patricia the daughter of QNDYTS (= Candidatus?), from Dara, went out of this world and is worthy of a good commemoration; so may God, Who sent to take her from this world, make her worthy to enter the Bridal Chamber with the lambs that are on His right Hand and with those five virgins who went in with the Bridegroom to the Bridal Chamber; and may God grant that she hear that blessed Utterance, which says: Come, blessed ones of my Father, inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world! Amen.

Much in this epigraph is reminiscent of C.1: the aristocratic names with their Byzantine associations; the prominence of Mort Mary ('My Lady Mary') and of her mother as noblewomen; the connection with Dara. Both memorials are evidence of a Byzantinizing and, therefore, probably Melkite aristocracy in eighth-century Dara (cf. pp. 167-8). An origin in that city is implied for all Mort Mary's ancestors, including her maternal grandfather, whose name may be the same as that of Candidatus of Amida (fl. 664/5), but who, as a native of Dara, can hardly be identified with that translator of Gregory Nazianzenus (pace I. Guidi, *Actes du Xe congr. orient.*, II (1986), pp. 75-83).

The Byzantine year began on 1 September. If the author of A.4 was Melkite, he may have reckoned in the Byzantine manner, which would mean that the date of Mort Mary's death was September 760, not 759.

The imagery is from Matthew 25:1-13, 33 and 34 and suggests that Mort Mary's title may signify a religious vow of virginity. Perhaps this is why her death is commemorated in writing. The brick tile may perhaps have been built into her tomb. If so, it would be the only 'tombstone' from the region around Tur Abdin; all subsequent epigraphs are found on the walls of churches or in apses, though one is in the antechamber of a burial vault.

Like C.1, A.4 may have imported a custom from Byzantium into Syriac culture, giving an impulse to funeral inscriptions. The apparent absence of earlier Christian Syriac epigraphs may be due to rejection of the custom as pagan or else simply to a long break with tradition during the sixth and seventh centuries. When the Syrian Orthodox church began, in the ninth and tenth centuries, to produce epigraphs, they reserved them, like other honours to the dead, for monks and clergy.

The first Syrian Orthodox cleric to be commemorated was Elijah, 'priest and church-head' of Amnas. To judge from A.5, 'church-head' was the title of the leader in a college of about four priests attached to a village church; this is borne out by the later inscriptions of Heshterek (*Inscr.* P 95-116). I therefore translate it as 'rector'. Elijah's father was not a bishop. That suggestion is based on a false reading which would see Elijah as 'priest and rector in the chancery of the late departed Mor Abraham'. The title 'Mor' would equally be applicable to a priested monk (cf. B.9); Abraham was probably a priest in Amnas before his son and retired in widowhood to a monastery (cf. pp. 174, 222).

C.2 In the year one thousand and seventy-two of Alexander (760/1), the priest and rector Elijah made this *kaisroma* (i.e. the temple-screen between the sanctuary and the nave in the church of Mor Cyriac at Amnas) in the days of our blessed patriarch, Mor Isaac, and in the days of the venerable bishop, Mor Cyriac. May God, for Whose holy Name's sake he made (it) with eagerness (literally: he ran and made), make for his departed ones a good commemoration for ever! Amen. The priest and rector Elijah, the son of the late departed Mor Abraham, went out of this world in the year one thousand and fifty-eight (746/7: sic!), in the month of April, on the fourth (day) in this (month). [May] his slumber [be] restful with the righteous for ever! Amen.

The two parts of this inscription were engraved together on the screen built by Elijah. No one remotely contemporary with Elijah could have made the mistake of dating his screen to the reign of the patriarch Isaac (755-6); yet the formula 'may God make for his departed ones a good

commemoration' is likely to have been written in Elijah's lifetime. Likewise, a memorial written shortly after Elijah's death would not have made the error of dating that event some 15 years before the construction of the screen; yet the phrase 'son of the late departed Mor Abraham' seems to have been written while Abraham's death was in the recent past.

The solution to these paradoxes lies in the complex process by which the text was generated. The original memorials were jotted down in a book, probably in the Gospel Book which stood in front of the altar. The first read as follows:

In the year 1072 of Alexander the priest and rector Elijah made the katastrōma of this church in the days of the venerable bishop, Mor Cyriac. May God, for Whose holy Name's sake he made (it) with eagerness, make for his departed ones a good commemoration for ever! Amen.

The second was identical with the second part of the inscription, except that it had the year 1078 written in alphabetical abbreviation. The letter signifying '70' was mistaken by the stonecutter for a similar letter, which signifies '50'. (The same confusion explains the corrupt date for the death of Gabriel of Beth Qusṭan: see pp. 156–8). At some date in the ninth century, to judge by the letter forms, it was decided to give greater publicity to these 'memoranda' by inscribing them in stone on the chancel-screen itself. The question of preserving them may have arisen when the Gospel Book in which they were written grew old and needed to be replaced. Following the epigraphic conventions as to dating formulas, the stonecutter added a synchronism with the patriarch. But there were five patriarchs contemporary with the bishop Cyriac; and the stonecutter, who was perhaps relying on oral tradition, chose the wrong one. It is interesting that Isaac was selected. The official record office of the patriarchate had struck him out as uncanonical. But perhaps Arnas was well disposed to him because he came from Tur 'Abdin: Isaac had been a monk of Qartmin.

H. Brevity and abbreviation in the inscriptions

The fact that a date in alphabetical abbreviation was corrupted in the process of being engraved in full words by the cutter of C.2 makes this a suitable place to consider the subject of abbreviation in the inscriptions generally. Why is abbreviation less common in the inscriptions of Tur 'Abdin than in Greek and Latin epigraphy (cf. *DACL* VII, cols. 627–31; 729–34), less, even, than in hand-written Syriac texts? The only formulaic phrase which is abbreviated more than once is 'those who participated'. There are many other formulas (e.g. 'in the days of', 'the year of Alexander', 'the year of the Greeks', 'let every one who reads (this) pray for him', 'he went out of this world and departed to his Lord,' etc.) which might have been shortened for epigraphic purposes. But, apart from a handful of accidentally conditioned abbreviations, i.e. such as are attributable not to a system but to immediate shortage of space, the recognized abbreviations of epigraphy in Tur 'Abdin fall into two categories: ecclesiastical titles ('patriarch', 'metropolitan', 'bishop', 'rector', 'priest' and 'deacon'; *not* stock epithets, such as 'blessed' for a patriarch or 'venerable' for a bishop) and numbers ('one thousand' is only once found abbreviated; the hundreds are abbreviated in A.15, A.16, A.19 and B.10; the tens only, in A.19 and B.13; the units only, in B.1; the tens and the units in A.5, A.6, A.15 and A.16). The lower ecclesiastical titles and the higher numbers are less commonly abbreviated.

The explanation is probably to be sought both in the isolation in which epigraphy in Tur 'Abdin developed (having no examples it did not occur to them to invent a special system of epigraphic abbreviations) and in the very solemnity of the monumental medium (abbreviations permissible to a scribe might have seemed slipshod and unsuitable when carved in stone). Perhaps the masons were also aware, when they engraved dates in full words, of the ease with which a date written in alphabetical abbreviation could be misread or damaged beyond recognition. The one

place where 'one thousand' was represented by a single letter is on a tomb in the monastery of Mor Michael outside Mardin; that letter has been obliterated so that, instead of AG 1496 (AD 1184/5), Jarry could read AG 496 (AD 184/5: *Inscr. J* 66). (The same mistake must lie behind Parry's report in *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (1895), p. 78.)

Instead of a system of abbreviations, the masons of Tur 'Abdin opted for brevity: a clipped style with conventional condensations of meaning. Some of these condensations were discussed in connection with A.2. In addition we may cite the phrase 'pardon him' meaning 'say: "God pardon him!"' (B.12, *Inscr. P* 25–31, 65, 98). In B.13 we read: 'The names of the bishops of this abbey from 1160', where a Syriac scribe would normally have written: 'The names of those bishops of this abbey who arose after the year 1160'. Particles and conjunctions are reduced to a minimum: just one of each kind is represented!

I. A.5, C.3 and A.12: the outdoor oratories of Tur 'Abdin

The two decades from 771/2 to 791/2 have yielded seven dated inscriptions. These are best dealt with thematically. In the context of these themes some of the undated inscriptions will be discussed.

The first theme is given by A.5, an inscription which no longer exists, because the church of Mor Addai at Heshterek and the outdoor oratory beside it have been destroyed to their foundations. Pogon, who recorded the inscription, explicitly rejected the possibility that it had been moved from another position to be built into the apse of the oratory. It therefore proves that the oratory and the church of Mor Addai were contemporary (*pace* Bell/Mango, *TA*, pp. 118–19; cf. *ibid.*, pl. 151). They are dated 771/2:

A.5 In the year one thousand and eighty-three of the Greeks this church was raised by Habib, the sinner, and Iyor, the rector, and the rest of the priests who were with them. Pray for all who participated!

Iyor (the name, unknown to Pogon, is attested by B.3 and by the *Life of Simeon of the Olives*, p. 239 [Dolabani, p. 153], summary, p. 178) was the 'church-head' or rector of Mor Addai (cf. C.2); to judge from the phrase 'and the rest of the priests who were with them', Habib belonged to Iyor's team of priests, which included at least two others. Habib's prominence in the inscription is therefore due to something other than hierarchical precedence. Was he a master stonemason or by far the most generous donor? Perhaps the verb 'was raised', unique to A.5, holds a clue to the nature of his contribution?

The apse of an outdoor oratory (in Syriac: *beth ṣlutho*) was a good place for inscriptions: light, but sheltered, and accessible to all. The apse at Heshterek contained 21 epitaphs in addition to A.5. The oratory of Mor Sova at Ḥaḥ shows seven epitaphs. There are two epitaphs in that of Mor Dodho at Beth Svirina and an inscription around the archivolt of the apse which dated the oratory. Unfortunately, all but the last digit of the date, which was six, has been obliterated, leaving ambiguous traces of what came before it. The following reconstruction is supported by a comparison of the cross carved in relief in the apse with that in the apse of the church of Mor Cyriac at Arnas (see fig. 53), dated by C.2 before 760/1, and by the letter forms, which may point to the later eighth century:

C.3 [...] with holy praise [...] in the year one thousand and one hundred and six of [the Greeks] (794/5) was built [this] beth [ṣlutho]; the priest Theodosios wrote (this).

The only other dated outdoor oratory in Tur 'Abdin is that of Mor Azazel in Kfarze (AD 934/5):

A.12 This beth ṣlutho was bilt built (the word was misspelled, then written again) in the year one thousand two hundred and forty-six of the Greeks in the days of Mor Iwannis, our bishop, and Mor Addai, the rector, and Thomas.

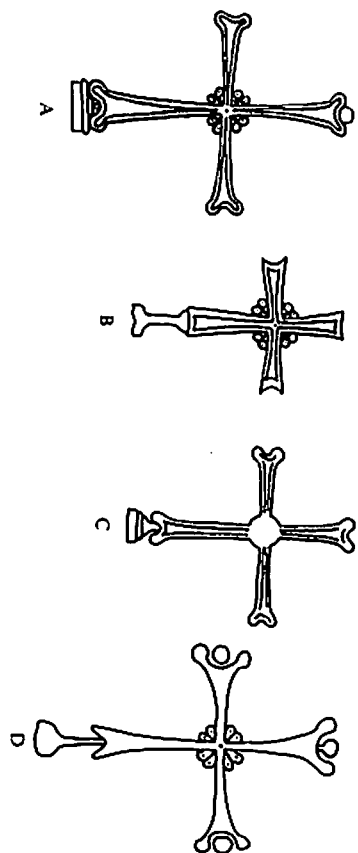


Fig. 53. Aps-crosses from: A. Kfarze; B. Hah; C. Amas; D. Beth Svirina (cf. *INSCR. C.3*)

The last name is split between two lines and is oddly lacking further specification: perhaps Thomas was a donor, proud enough to have his name inscribed, but humble enough to refuse to have any details added.

Gerrude Bell considered most of the outdoor oratories ('exedras') of Tur 'Abdin more recent than the churches to which they belong (Bell/Mango, *T.4*, p. 14). This is certainly true of Kfarze, but not of Heshterek (A.5); C.3, by the omission of a reference to the church, implies that the oratory was built separately and, therefore, later. At Amas there are two outdoor apses, side by side (see Bell/Mango, *T.4*, pl. 98). The one nearest to the church shows its greater age by the depth of its foundations and by the style of its masonry, which is not inconsistent with that of the church. The wall above the arch of the apse is much later and probably contemporary with the second oratory, which was perhaps constructed because the old one had 'sunk' too deep to be useful. This wall incorporated several blocks of a darker colour, which seem to have belonged to a dismantled altar out of the sanctuary of Mor Cyniac: one bears an inscription, dating the altar (*madbhho*, not *thronos*) to 1216/17 (*Inscr. P.54*); another is hollowed to receive a socket; another is carved with a cockle-shell in an edicule, perhaps the centre-piece of the altar.

J. A.7 and the dates of the village churches of Tur 'Abdin

The second theme is suggested by the fact that A.7 dates the church of St Stephen at Kfarbe earlier than 778/9. This inscription is engraved vertically across several blocks of stone on the left jamb of the easternmost of two doorways in the south wall of the nave, from without. Before it was blocked up, this was the men's entrance; a sign perhaps that literacy was not expected of the women. If the stone-mason had begun his text up the right jamb like A.2, he would not have run out of space; the fact that he did otherwise and was consequently forced to fit in the latter part here and there above (i.e. to the left of) the first line shows that he did not make a preparatory outline. Nevertheless, he was proud enough of his handiwork to add his name:

A.7 In the year one thousand and ninety of the Greeks was [entombed] in [this] church the priest John. Alas! Zakay (cut the inscription).

The church of St Stephen, which is flanked by the chapels of St John the Baptist and Mor Shalio, to north and south respectively, and which has an outdoor oratory on the south side, is disproportionately large for its village. It may have been built to accommodate pilgrims

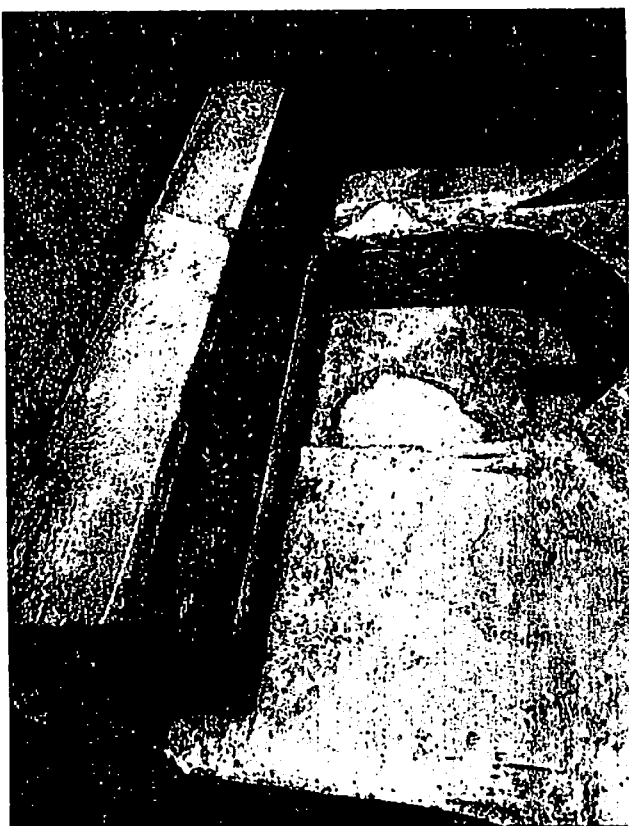


Fig. 54. The stone slab bearing inscription A.6 of AD 776/7 (Photo: Bert Lanson)

(especially women and children) to the abbey of Qartmin, less than a mile away to the east on the same ancient thoroughfare which passes by Kfarbe.

The churches of Mor Cyniac at Amas and of Mor Addai at Heshterek are securely dated, the one before 760/1 (C.2), the other to 771/2 (A.5). Mor Azzazel at Kfarze is very much like Mor Cyniac at Amas and the brickwork of its vault closely resembles that of the monastic church outside Salab, dated by B.1-8 to the early 750s. The apse crosses in the oratories at Beth Svirina and at Hah are so like those in the churches of Kfarze and of Amas that they are almost certain to be of the same period (fig. 53), which would suggest an even earlier date for the churches of Mor Dodo (Beth Svirina) and Mor Sovo (Hah). The latter, like the domed church of the Mother of God at Hah, may even go back to the sixth century. The church of Mor Simeon at Habsenus was rebuilt by Simeon of the Olives before 734: tradition associates Simeon with the construction of the church of Mor Cyniac at Anbel, the architecture of which is certainly consistent with the style of the other seventh- or eighth-century churches in Tur 'Abdin. From these evidences it emerges that many of the chief village churches of the region were built in that period.

K. A.6, A.8 and C.4-12: monastic expansion at Qartmin

B.1-8 have already shown how a monastery and a village worked together, the latter (apparently) in a dependent role, to construct a conventual church. A.6-9, B.9-10 and C.4-12 all testify to the expansion of monastic property in the eighth century and perhaps beyond, when general

conditions and the lack of ninth-century building records from the villages suggest that the latter were in recession (cf. Chapter 6).

- A.6 Zechariah of 'Aynwardo made (this) in the year one thousand and eighty of the Greeks (768/9) in 'the House of the Bear'; and from the moment when he aged (i.e. felt unequal to the task by reason of old age), he entreated Isaiah of Fofyath, his shawshbino (i.e. relative by sponsorship), to bring it (to Qartmin); and Isaiah took great pains and (so did) all the sons (i.e. inmates) of the monastery; and they brought it and polished it and put it in its place in the year one thousand and eighty-eight (776/7) in the days of George, our bishop; and he (sc. the bishop) helped with the cost of it according to his power. Cyril of 'Aynwardo engraved (this).

The object on which these words are inscribed is a fawn-coloured stone slab (fig. 54) measuring 3.30 × 1.40 × 0.40 m with a raised rim around the upper surface and a hole in one corner which served as a drain. On one side the rim bulges where a bowl is carved out of it. Until 1973 it stood in the centre of the nave of the conventual church at Qartmin, in front of the entrance to the sanctuary, where it was used as a book-stand, replacing the northern and southern lecterns which serve in a Syrian Orthodox church for the antiphonal chanting of the regular Hours (cf. Pogonon, *Inscriptions*, p. 43 n. 1). In this position it was mistaken by one traveller for an ancient communion table (Preusser, *Baudenkmäler*, pp. 31–2). There was an oven in the masonry base on which it was set (see Chapter 4, n. 131).

Section 19 of the *Life of Gabriel* was written with reference to this inscription and this slab. There are minor discrepancies as to the measurements (LXXXI.4–5) and the colour (LXXXI.2) of the slab; but the two texts agree that it was quarried³ in Beth Debeh ('the House of the Bear' is an etymological periphrasis for Beth Debeh, now Badibbe, four hours' ride to the south of Qartmin: cf. LXXXI.6 [sic] and A. Socin, *ZDMG* 35 (1881), p. 262), that it took seven or eight years to finish, and that all the inmates of the monastery had a hand in transporting it. The author of the *Life* must have felt confident that his audience would not read the inscription and see that he had suppressed names and dates to sustain the pious fiction that the slab was commissioned by Gabriel, who died in 648!

According to the same *Life of Gabriel* the slab was originally placed in the domed octagon near the church where it now stands. There, next to the long vaulted chamber which was used as a kitchen, it served as a kneading-trough on which the dough was prepared for the bread used by the community.

In the plague of 774, which was surely a factor contributing to the delay in the production of the slab (perhaps also to the sudden senility of Zechariah), Qartmin lost 95 monks (*Chr. Zuqnin* 775, p. 368 [Chabot, p. 186]). If the remnant nevertheless continued to invest in the transportation of the slab, they must have had both funds and numbers sufficient to merit large-scale centralized bread-production.

At a later date, when the community dwindled, the slab was placed in the church above an oven and used for the production of altar-breads for the Liturgy. The elements of the Eucharistic Sacrifice were often prepared inside a Syrian church. This is what explains the presence of a small grape-treading basin in the chapel of St John the Baptist at Kfarbe.

'Mor Zechariah of 'Aynwardo and his brother Cyril' were among the disciples of Simeon of the Olives, who died in 734 (see p. 163). The title 'Mor' probably distinguishes Zechariah as a priested monk, which would mean he was over 30 years old at the time of writing. He may well have been over 70 when he began to supervise the production of the slab, so it is no wonder that he was significantly enfeebled during the next seven or eight years.

³ The *Qartmin Trilogy* contains three references (XXV11.2; LIX.13; LXXXI.1) to the iron claws (Syriac: *msarqo* = comb) which were used to shape stone (see Strong and Brown, eds., *Roman Crafts* (1976), p. 197, with illustration).

The fact that Zechariah was a monk may mean that he acted as baptismal and/or marital sponsor for Isaiah, who lived in the nearby village of Fofyath, also called Kfarbe. It is true that this kind of relationship between monks and laymen was forbidden in a canon of 878 (*Can. W-Syr.* II, p. 54 (No. 6)); but that also shows that it existed unchecked before that date. Alternatively, the two men may have inherited the relationship; for we see from another canon (*Can. W-Syr.* II, p. 62 (No. 14)), that it was hereditary and, indeed, constituted a prohibited degree in marriage for longer than a blood-tie.

Another inscription attesting the good health of the economy at Qartmin is dated 784/5; it was extracted from a wall where the inscribed surface had lain hidden. The present author discovered it, in company with Malfono İsa Gülsen, in 1978:

- A.8 In the year one thousand and ninety-six [of Greece] in the days of Mor Geo[rge] and Mor Michael, the b[ishop], the abbot, Mor Denho, and Gadal[ia]h of Arnas, the admin[istrator], and Aaron, the sandal-mak[er] and steward, and Micah and Joshua [and A]lexander, [the arch]itects, made this winepress.

The omission of the patriarch's title is an offence against protocol. This might be construed as intentional, since enmity between George and Qartmin is attested at the time of his election (see Chapter 5, n. 227). On the other hand, it may have been a mistake, which motivated the concealment of the flawed text.

The building from which A.8 was extracted stands to the north-east of the conventual church (figs. 32 and 33). It is known as the Old Library, because the 41 masonry compartments in one of its walls have been taken to be cubby-holes for books. But the total absence of windows makes it more likely that it was a charnel-house, the compartments in the wall being designed to display the piled up skulls which were counted whenever the burial vaults and mausolea were cleared of bones (cf. Chapter 3, n. 173). The other bones would have been heaped up in store-rooms and, as the sum of bones mounted continuously, extensions would have been needed to accommodate them. Such extensions are indeed found in the 'Old Library'.

The charnel-house of Qartmin contains a number of 'inscriptions' moulded in plaster on the underside of its arches. The abbot Isaiah (C.7) appears to have built the north-west chamber, while the abbot Denho (C.10) left his name on an arch of the high corridor by which the rooms of the charnel-house communicate with one another. The latter's contribution to the structure was more substantial than a mere extension.

If this Denho is the same as the abbot named in A.8 (the similarity of the letter-forms allows this possibility), then the theory that A.8 was concealed as a reject is probably right, because it was extracted from the same wall in which the arch bearing C.10 was built (fig. 55). This identification would indicate that the abbey was carrying out other improvements to its buildings at the time when the winepress was built.

- C.7 The abbot Isaiah made (this).
C.8 [...] of Mayperqas [...] house.
C.9 [...] house [...] John [...].
C.10 In the days of Mor Denho, the abbot, [the son] of G[...].
C.11 [Rabbaj]n [Dan]iel, a senior monk, renovated and built (onto) [this house]. Pray for him!

South of the charnel-house is an arcade with a plaster-moulded memorial (cf. figs. 2 and 14). The letter-forms may indicate the eighth century:

- C.5 [...] the admin[istrator] and Sliv[o], the steward, and the Hejad of the Brothers, Peter, [mad]e [this] arcade. The builders were Joshua, Abu Zakhary. Pray [for them]!

The other undated inscriptions of Qartmin Abbey (C.4, C.6 and C.12) and the inscription from Qartmin Village (C.13) are of little or no use to the historian, so I omit them here.

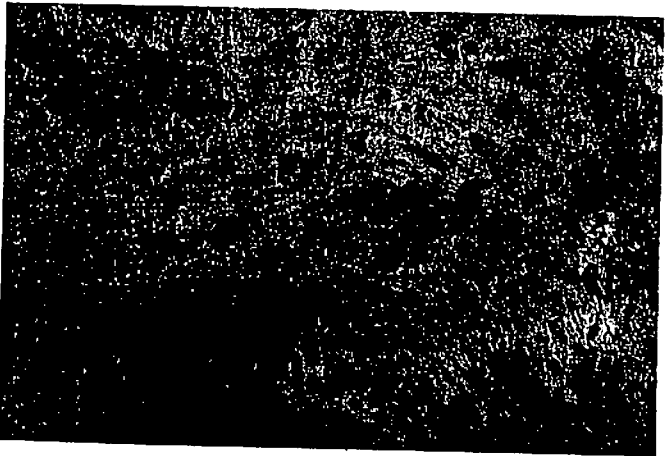


Fig. 55. The 'Old Library', interior, showing the gap where the mosaic A.8, of AD 784/5, was extracted (cf. fig. 32)

L. B.9, B.10, D.14, C.14 and A.9: monastic expansion elsewhere

Qartmin was not the only monastery which added to its buildings at this time. The Monastery of the Cross of Beth El, north-east of Zaz, which had lost all its leading men in the plague of 774 (*Chr. Zuqrat* 775, p. 368 [Chabot, p. 186]) was sufficiently resilient to construct a large burial vault adjoining the chapel of Mor Aho between 775 and 790. (Might the vault have been necessitated by a high rate of mortality?)

B.9 This bath (qadishah) ('house of saints', i.e. burial vault for holy people) was built in the days of [Mor] George, our patriarch, and our venerable bishop, Mor Srov, of this abbey, and [Mor] Daniel, the abbot, and [Mor] Ezekiel, the sacristan, and Elijah, the Head of the Brothers, and Abel, the administrator, [with] all the rest of the sons (i.e. the inmates) of the abbey, so may God make them worthy of [His] Kingdom which is in heaven [...]

George of Belan was the only Syrian Orthodox patriarch of that name. His official reign was from 758 to 790, but he was imprisoned for nine years in Baghdad and released only in 775. During his imprisonment, the anti-patriarch David reigned for a while; this David was a contemporary of Bishop Cyriac of Tur 'Abdin, whose reign began before that of George. The bishop named in B.9 was not Cyriac, so it must have been one of his successors after 775.

This inscription is unique in naming four monastic officers: abbot, sacristan, *rish dān* or Head of the Brothers (see pp. 94-6) and administrator.

Not far away and towards the end of George's reign – more precisely: at the monastery of Sis Sergius and Bacchus outside Hah in 788/9 – a new conventual church was erected. The memorial is on the lintel of the south entrance to the sanctuary, facing the nave:

B.10 To the glory and to the praise and to the honour of the Holy Trinity: this temple was built in the year one thousand and one hundred in that (sc. the reckoning) of the Greeks by the care [of ...].

The letter-forms and the diction support the reading 'one hundred' rather than another possible restoration giving an earlier date. The church in question is the only building of any importance in the small monastery; it has been studied architecturally by Wiessner (*Kulibanten*, 1, pp. 15-25). Restoration work on the monastery, no doubt including the church, was carried out in 1442/3 (D.14) and at another date unknown (D.15).

The monastery of Mor Lazarus just to the south of the village of Habsenus is another small, outlying complex. Pognon (*Inscriptions*, p. 66 n. 1) visited this village for a couple of hours and sent a servant to look at the monastery. It seems the servant was no less lazy that day than his master, for no inscriptions were reported. There is, in fact, a prominent, undated inscription above the entrance, the letter-forms of which enable it and perhaps the *loggia* behind it to be dated between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries:

C.14 This chamber was built by the care of Rabban Joseph. Pray for him and me, who wrote (this)! A second inscription is on the hermit's column in the yard of the monastery (see figs. 37 and 38), which it dates to 791/2, long after the death of Simeon of the Olives, to whom the *Life of Simeon of the Olives* (p. 238 [Dolabani, p. 152], summary, p. 478) attributes the construction of such a column in this monastery:

A.9 This column was built in the year one thousand one hundred and three of Greece: Marquno ('little Mark') wrote (this).

M. B.11, A.13 and A.14: the decadence of the ninth and tenth centuries

Many of the eighth-century inscriptions discussed above have been recorded by the present author for the first time and all those which are surviving or of which illustrations are available have been scrutinized afresh and more accurately represented by him. The 'Preliminary List of Dated Monuments Built by Christians in Northern Mesopotamia' (Bell/Mango, *T.4*, pp. 161-4) contains six buildings dated by inscriptions between 691 and 800; to these must be added the five buildings dated by A.3, A.8, A.9, B.1 and B.9 and the dates 691 and 751 in the 'Preliminary List' are to be corrected from B.10 and A.15 respectively to 788/9 and 1084/5 (see Table 2).

Only one dated ninth-century inscription is known: a building record moulded in plaster on the vault of one of five interconnected chambers on the south-east side of the conventual church at Qartmin:

B.11 The patriarch, Mor Theodosius, and the venerable bishop of Tur 'Abdin [sic], Mor Ezekiel, made this house; Michael (wrote this).

Bishop Ezekiel of Tur 'Abdin/Tur 'Abdin (for the variant spelling first attested in B.11, see Chapter 1, n. 46) was ordained by the patriarch Theodosius (887-96) who died in retreat at Qartmin, the abbey from which he had been called to the patriarchate (*Chr. Michael* 195, Register XXI.14, p. 757).

It was argued in Chapter 6 that the virtual absence of ninth-century building records is to be related to a general recession, particularly in the highlands. Even the tenth century has yielded very little. A.12, of 934/5, was discussed under TETH in connection with A.5. A.13 is not from

Ṭur 'Abdin, but it is indirectly relevant, in that it attests monastic expansion in the immediate vicinity of a city, a phenomenon concomitant with the desertion of the highlands (cf. pp. 185–6):

A.13 In the Name of God: This column was built in the year three hundred and fifty of the Arabs (20 Feb. 961 to 8 Feb. 962). Let every one who reads (this) pray for Maron the monk (who) took care of the building of it!

This inscription is on a square tower supporting a later bell-tower in the monastery of Mor Michael, just to the south of Mardin (fig. 56). An entry under 1 May in the *Calendar of Ṭur 'Abdin* reads: 'Mor Michael and his sister (whose monastery is) outside the southern gate of Mardin; and it is called the Monastery of the Column' (cf. Baršawm, *Histoire du couvent de S. Hanania* (1917), p. 24: it is also called – in Arabic – the Monastery of the Fish; also Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery* (1895), pp. 73–9). 'The Monastery of the Column' was surely so named after the hermit's column (cf. A.9) commemorated in A.13; it was among the monuments around Mardin restored about 1250–5 by Moses, abbot of Mor Abay above Qeleth (*Inscr. P* 93).

Certain indications of Islamic influence in A.13 suggest that Syriac culture was on the wane at this time and that the town of Mardin was already predominantly Arab. The opening of the inscription echoes the Arabic, *bismillah*, and has no parallel in Syriac epigraphy. The year from the Hijra, moreover, is very rarely used by Syriac sources in preference to the Seleucid era.

Another sign of decadence is that the stonemason who engraved A.13 was unable to sustain a pure Estrangelo or Old Syriac style of lettering and mixed all the scripts together. When Bishop John of Ṭur 'Abdin revived the ancient script c.1000, it had been 'out of use' in his diocese for a hundred years (*Chr. Gregory II*, cols. 417, 419).

The life of the remaining monks in Ṭur 'Abdin was insecure towards the end of the tenth century; this is indicated by the fact that the conventual church at Qartmin was secured with stone window-grids in 988/9. The evidence is a fragment of one of the grids, which was extracted in 1963:

A.14 [...] the year of one thousand and] three hundred.

N. A.10 and A.11: epitaphs at Midun and at Zaz

If the tenth century is poor in building records, it is rich in epitaphs. In 911 or in 914 a nun was buried in Midun, the earliest recorded female religious in Ṭur 'Abdin:

A.10 [In the year] one thousand two hundred and twenty-[three/six] of the Greeks, on the feast of the Nat[iv]ity of our Lord, the nun BRTMHN ('the daughter of MHN') went out of this [corrupt] world; so may God, Whose light yoke she bore (cf. Mt. 11:29–30), make her worthy of His Bridal Chamber full of joys with those ten wise virgins (*sic*) who were successful and greased their lamps with oil (Mt. 25:1–13), by the prayer of His Mother and His Saints! Amen.

In 932 – more precisely, between 13 Jan. and 31 Dec. of that year – another epitaph was engraved at Zaz, on a pier of the church of Mor Dimet:

A.11 KBDYNH' (perhaps a title?) Zakhary, the son of Lazarus, went out of this world [and] departed to his Lord (in) the year three hundred and twenty of the Arab. Alas! Let [every one who] reads (this) pray for him!

This is the earliest Syriac inscription dated by the Islamic era and one of the two known Syriac epitaphs containing the word 'Alas!' (Syriac: *woy*; also in A.7).

O. *Inscr. P* 22–32, A.20, *Inscr. P* 65–71 and D.1–13: epitaphs at Ṣalah and at Hah

The earliest Syrian Orthodox epitaph, if we may discount the Appendix to C.2, may be *Inscr. P* 24 at Ṣalah, dated August, 908:

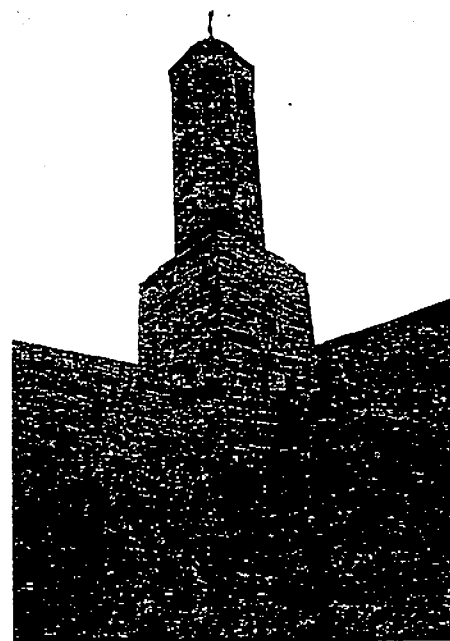


Fig. 56. Tower in monastery of Mor Michael near Mardin, showing a white paper squeeze drying on *INSCR. A.13* of AD 961

The holy bishop of Serugh, Mor John, from this very abbey (*sc.* of Mor Jacob the Recluse), went out of this world full of afflictions and departed to the Lord in the year one thousand two hundred and nineteen of the Greeks in the month of August, on the sixth (day) of it, a Friday. Let every one who reads (this) pray for him!

'John; bishop for Serugh, from the monastery of the Recluse in Ṭur 'Abdin' was the twenty-first bishop ordained by the patriarch Theodosius (887–96: *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register XX1.21, p. 757). His abbey was moved to commemorate in stone the first bishop it had produced, although an anomaly in the inscription suggests that he did not die at Ṣalah (6 Aug. 908 was not a Friday).

Four years later the honour of an epitaph was extended to the sacristan of the abbey. Thus a custom was instituted which lasted for about 200 years. In general, abbots and priested monks were commemorated, but there are two epitaphs in which unpriested monks are mentioned and one inscription (*Inscr. P* 27) which records the inalienable gift of land to the church by a villager. All these memorials (*Inscr. P* 22–32) are on the east wall of the antechamber of the conventual church, on either side of the entrance to the nave, where they might best be read by those coming in. There is another epitaph on a block of limestone among the ruins to the north of the church; it is dated 1226 and the word 'chamber' in this context suggests that Ṣalah was already the residence of a bishop:

A.20 Rabban Elijah, priest and monk and spiritual son (*lit.* son of the discipline) of this chamber, went out of this world and departed to his Lord in the year one thousand [and] five hundred and thirty-seven of the Greeks, in the month of June, on the ninth (day) in it. Let every one who reads (this) pray for him [and accept us for the sake of Christ!]

Epitaphs were not equally popular in other monasteries and villages at the same time. The only comparable epigraphic archives are at Hah and (formerly) at Heshterek. In Hah there are seven epitaphs on the apse of the oratory next to the ruined church of Mor Sovo (*Inscr. P* 65-71), ranging in date from 1135 to 1295 and commemorating a rector, a priest, three deacons and two bishops. At the monastery of Sts Sergius and Bacchus, just east of Hah, there is an arch opposite the entrance of the conventual church, on the underside of which are engraved records of the deaths of monks (and others?) from 1103 to either 1218 or 1232 (D.1-13).

P. *Inscr. P* 95-116: epitaphs at Heshterek – a clerical ‘archive’

The richest and most revealing repository of funereal records was the apse of the new ruined outdoor oratory at Heshterek. *Inscr. P* 95-116 represent all but a few of the lost inscriptions; those which Pogon neglected were illegible. (In the following, ‘No. 95’ stands for ‘*Inscr. P* 95’.)

The earliest epitaph at Heshterek was dated 912/13 (No. 107); it commemorated the death of the deacon Gabriel, son of the priest and rector Job, and it was inscribed by two priests, John and ‘Ulwan. We discern a college of at least three priests of whom one was designated ‘rector’, a pattern similar to that already displayed in 771/2 by No. 96 (= A.5). From 972 to 1041/2 the privilege of an epitaph was reserved for the rector alone, but the signatures of priest-masons allow the inference that the number of their college remained stable at three to four. That level is maintained in subsequent inscriptions, until a decline sets in in the twelfth century. The last rector recorded died by a violent hand in 1165/6; his son, the priest Solomon, died in the same year. Between 1172 and 1182 the village lost four more priests and two students for the priesthood: a deacon and a scholar. In the thirteenth century the epigraphic record is thin (this itself may be a symptom of decline); in the two dated inscriptions, No. 114 of 1233/4 and No. 112 of 1294, one priest and one deacon are mentioned.

From 972/3 to 1165/6 the ‘archive’ is so complete that a continuous succession of rectors can be reconstructed:

- 1 Šlivo (d. 972/3)
- 2 ‘Ulwan, reigned 3 years (d. 975/6)
- 3 Hōye, reigned 21 years (d. 996/7)
- 4 Peter, reigned 14 years (d. 1010/11)
- 5 Severus, reigned 8 years (d. 1018/19)
- 6 Addai, reigned 23 years (d. 1041/2)
- 7 [Jes]se, reigned 32 years (d. 1073/4)
- 8 Bsiro, reigned 29 years (d. 1102/3)
- 9 Noah, whose epitaph was on the same stone as that of Bsiro, but without a date
- 10 Isaac (d. 1143/4)
- 11 David, reigned 22 years (d. 1165/6)

The inscriptions of Heshterek were signed by the engravers, who were as a rule either priests or the sons of priests. The stonecutter Samuel in No. 102 (1041/2) is probably the priest Samuel who died in 1043/4 (No. 103). Another priest of that name is commemorated in No. 95 (1077/8); he can be identified with the engraver of No. 110 (1059/60). Bsiro, son of the rector [Jes]se and himself a priest, inscribed his father’s epitaph in 1073/4 (No. 106) and that of the priests Samuel and Solomon (No. 95), who died in 1077/8. Bsiro died as rector in 1102/3; his epitaph was inscribed by his son, Abū Ghalab, whose own memorial is placed on the same stone (No. 97). He died as a priest in 1123/4, in the year of the violent death of another priest, Abu Sahel (No. 108). The Daniel who engraved this last epitaph may be the priest of that name whose epitaph was written by his son Moses in 1172/3 (No. 115). Moses signed three other inscriptions: Nos. 111, 105 and 116 of 1180/1, 1181/2 and 1195/6; his own death is recorded in an undated epitaph. Thus, in the period

from 1041/2 until the end of the twelfth century almost every stonecutter was himself the subject of a subsequent memorial.

There is other evidence to support the resultant impression that the priesthood at Heshterek was hereditary and that literacy (and thus the ability to engrave memorials) was limited to the priestly clan. The rare name ‘Ulwan, which occurs only in these inscriptions, appears in several different generations as the name of a priest. It may have been handed down from grandfather to grandson, since No. 111 records the death of the priest Simeon, son of the priest ‘Ulwan.

In 1041/2 the death of a priest coincided with that of a rector; the commemoration of both together set a precedent. Priests henceforth received epitaphs, too (one retrospectively). They were joined later by deacons and scholars, to whom must be added one very young boy and a thirteenth-century layman whose death coincided with that of a deacon. Thus the privilege was gradually extended beyond the circle of priests, although the poignant epitaph of 1110/11 (No. 109), which initiated this extension, suggests that the wider circle was intended only to include those who were being *schooled* for the priesthood, the young boy being perhaps a prospective scholar.

Q. B.12 and the calligraphic revival of c.1000

The theme of education offers a transition to B.12, an inscription which brings us directly into contact with the man who initiated a calligraphic revival in Tur ‘Abdin around the year 1000: Bishop John (*Chr. Gregory II*, cols. 417, 419). The roots of this revival are to be sought in the region of Melitene, as the present author documents elsewhere (*OC* 70 (1986), pp. 37-68); its effects were to be felt for many centuries. John was a native of Beth Svirina (see B.13) and a monk of Qartmin. He was 26th of the 39 bishops created by the patriarch Athanasius IV Salhoyo (986-1002/3; *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xxx, p. 761), so it is unlikely that Gregory’s date (987/8) for his ordination is right. Denis IV Hōye was elected patriarch in 1031; he ordained John’s successor shortly after moving to Amida in 1034 (*Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xxxii.12, p. 763). Thus the synchronism of patriarch and bishop enables the date of the inscription to be fixed between 1031 and 1035:

B.12 In the days of the patriarch Mor Denis and Mor John, our bishop. The builders were the monks Abu’l-Khayr and Isaac. Let everyone who reads (this) pray for all who participated and let him (ask God to) pardon them and their departed ones and Kulaib, the Head of the Brothers!

This inscription is in two fragments, immured in the wall of the conventual church at Qartmin; their original reference is unknown. No previous epigraphic memorial was so carefully proportioned, so well laid out, so finely executed. The letter-forms are as close as the difference of medium allows to the calligraphic style adopted by Bishop John and his school. It is this which makes it certain that B.12 is not from the reign of the patriarch Denis II (896/7-908/9), who was contemporary with another bishop John of Tur ‘Abdin (*Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xxii.19, p. 757).

In Heshterek we encountered stonecutter-priests; B.12 specifically introduces two men who were both masons and monks. The deacon Joshua apparently claims to be a monk of Mor Jacob at Šalah (B.7) and the prominence of his name on the church (B.5) suggests he was involved in building it, probably as a master stone-mason.

Another curious feature is the presence of two Arab names in the inscription: Abu’l-Khayr (meaning ‘Father of the Good’) and Kulaib (an apotropaic name meaning ‘Little Dog’). No Arabic names occur in the corpus before 771/2 (A.5) and, even there, Hābib is a borderline case. Arab influence is evident in the formation of the names Abu Zakhary (C.5), Abu Ghalab, Abu Sahel and Abu Nasr (these three in the epitaphs at Heshterek). As clergy or monks, none of these

men would have enjoyed the religious camouflage which has sometimes been sought by Christians living under Islamic oppression. Rather, these names show a degree of integration into the dominant culture which was evidently not incompatible with a tenacious sense of local Christian tradition.

R. A.15–17 and the lay-out and orientation of the inscriptions

After B.12 we find several inscriptions showing the same care for proportion, lay-out and fine execution. C.14 was introduced in connection with A.9, because it is in the same monastery. A.15 is contemporary with Bishop John; and A.17, though much later in date, shows how the renewed calligraphy was perpetuated.

A.15 In the year one thousand three hundred and forty-five of the Greeks (1033/4) these holy buildings were renovated. Let every one who reads (this) pray for all who participated! In the days of Mor Zebedee, the abbot.

This inscription is in the burial vaults built between 775 and 790 (B.9) at the Monastery of the Cross. The words 'these holy buildings' (Syriac: *bote hōlen qadishe*) evoke the term *beth qadishe* ('house of saints').

A.17 is inscribed on a carefully prepared rectangular surface on the wall of the rock-hewn vestibule which leads into the underground burial vault at the Monastery of Mor Moses, near Kfarze. The text is in the metre of Jacob of Serugh. The divisions between the twelve-syllable verses are carefully marked, but they do not coincide with the line-divisions of the inscription. As in A.15, B.12 and C.14, diacritical points are used which are not found in inscriptions before the calligraphic revival. The lines are equally spaced and the letters regular in size. Painstaking scansion and execution pay tribute to the scholastic standards of the day; the diction is only occasionally strained by the necessity to accommodate the metre. If this may not be praised as truly poetic, it has at least the merit of being the only metrical inscription in Tur 'Abdin:

A.17 In the year one thousand and four hundred years (added *metri causa*) eighty and four (1172/3), an honoured master and teacher left (this) world full of troubles and all trials and removed and departed to the land of blessings and of delights: 'Daniel' was his name. His friends should mourn him with great sorrow, because a shining lamp, rich in inflammation (*sic*), has been extinguished from them. Let the Church mourn him, for he would ever cheer her with his beautiful hymns and his writings! Let all scribes and wise men mourn him, for he amazed them by his writings and by his wisdom! Let the earth, in which his body is hidden, mourn him, for it is destroying the great sea of all his wisdom! May the Lord allot him a place with the Saints and the Teachers, and with the angels may he shout out praise to the Lord Christ!

This Daniel was a priest of Heshterek, where his son, Moses, sculpted a fine memorial for him in the outdoor oratory beside the church of Mor Addai (*Inscr. P* 115):

Rabban Daniel, priest, writer and teacher, left this world in the year 1484 of the Greeks. Let every one who reads (this) pray for him for our Lord's sake! His son Moses, the sinner, wrote (this) and sculpted this tablet (*sc.* the ornate incised frame).

Probably he retired as a widower to the monastery of Mor Moses (fig. 57), which is about 3 km from Heshterek (cf. Abraham of Arnas in C.2). The metrical genre must be held to account for the omission of the word 'priest' and of the title 'Mor' (which was due to a priested monk) from A.17.

There is an earlier inscription at the Monastery of Mor Moses, dated 1084/5. Its extreme state of erosion makes it difficult to judge the fineness of its execution; certainly, it was not so carefully laid out in advance:

A.16 By the care of Kawsho of the family of the faithful Amos and of (those) who participated and by the agency of Michael, priest and monk, who was a/the resident in this monastery, in the days of Mor

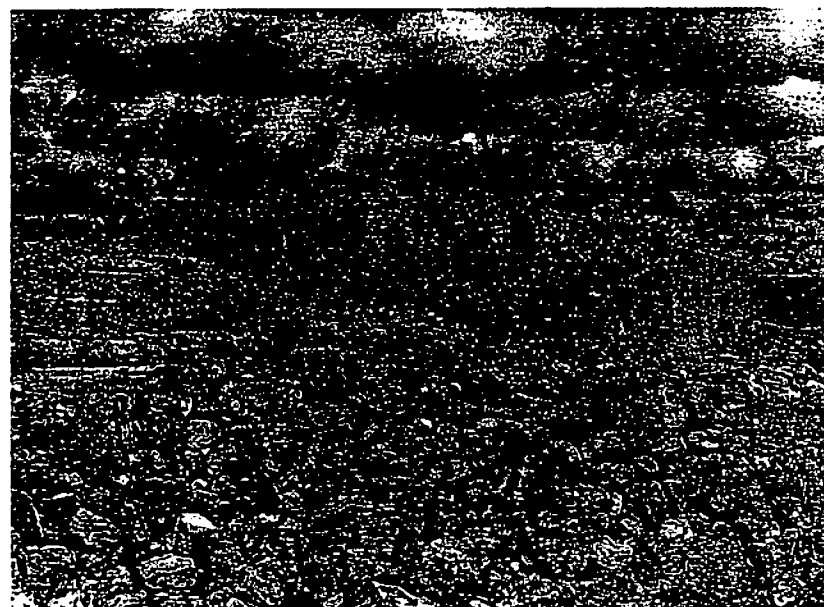


Fig. 57. The monastery of Mor Moses, near Kfarze and Heshterek

Basil the bishop (cf. *Chr. Michael* 1195, Register xxxiii.11, p. 763), in the year one thousand three hundred and ninety-six in that (i.e. the reckoning) of the Greeks. Let every one who reads (this) pray for Habib, the sinner, who engraved (this memorial) and for all who participated.

The phrases 'by the care of' and 'who participated' refer, as elsewhere (A.13, A.15, B.3, B.8, B.10, B.12, C.14), to financial contributions. Only in A.6 is it uncertain whether 'Isaiah took great pains' (the same verbal root is elsewhere translated 'care') means that he invested money as well as energy. What building was commemorated in A.16 is unknown, because it is ruined; a neighbouring block of stone bears traces of two funereal inscriptions.

It is striking how few of the inscriptions show evidence of planning and measurement in advance – the process known among Roman epigraphists as *ordinatio* (Susini, *Il lapicida romano* (1966), Ch. II, pp. 18–20, Ch. v *et passim*). In general the mason improvised as he went along. In A.6 and B.13 a larger script is used in the upper lines of horizontal inscriptions; this might be thought to be intentional, as it would allow a reader standing below to see the further words more clearly. But the position of these inscriptions is not and was not above eye-level. A close examination of B.13 reveals that the incised frame is itself narrower at the bottom, suggesting general distortion through perspective: the mason took up a position on the ground beside the horizontal surface on which he proceeded to engrave. In A.6 the shrinking script is due to initial optimism, belied by a growing sense of the lack of space. A.7 and A.18 show a deranged order of words made necessary by the failure of the mason to plan the distribution of his text.

Yet several stonecutters had an excellent eye for fitting words into a space; indeed, it was probably their confidence in this skill which led them so often to dispense with planning in advance. Where did they gain this skill? The overall quantity of inscriptions found in Tur 'Abdin

is so small (and it is so rare to find more than one inscription from one generation in one place) that few people can have had much practice in the art of epigraphy before they came to inscribe a memorial, unless a vast quantity of epigraphic material has disappeared. Their skill must have derived from scribal training. This may be why inscriptions are normally aligned with the shorter sides of a rectangular space: that is how the page of a small codex is inscribed.

The codex may also help to explain the variable orientation of the inscriptions: A. 5, A. 7, A. 9, A. 11, A. 12, A. 17, B. 3, B. 6, B. 7, B. 8, B. 10, C. 1, C. 2 and C. 14 are all written vertically, from top to bottom. (That this was the original orientation of C. 1 can be seen from the fact that the beginning of the lines of writing was better protected from erosion than the end.) The same is true of the epitaphs at Ṣalah, at Ḥaḥ and at Heshterek. On the other hand, all the inscriptions at Qartmin Abbey, except C. 1, and a few others besides, are orientated horizontally. In the case of B. 1 and B. 5, which are contemporary with a number of vertical inscriptions on the same building, some significance may be seen in the difference; here it would seem that the horizontal inscriptions were orientated thus for greater legibility. Vertical orientation may have been the older tradition in Syriac. After the invention of the codex, the Syrians continued to write vertically (Wright, *MSS London*, p. xxvii; Land, *Anecdota Syriaca* 1, pp. 60–1), but they took over from the Greeks the layout of their pages and learned to read horizontally. The skins or quires of paper were folded and arranged for binding in the normal way, but were turned through 90° for the process of writing, the left-hand side of the future codex being nearest to the scribe.

A vertical inscription resembles a page under the scribe's hand, a horizontal inscription consciously imitates a book under the reader's eye. Repeated appeals in vertical inscriptions for the prayers of 'every one who reads (this)' prove that they were intended, no less than the horizontal ones, to be read. But at Ṣalah, where a conscious choice was made in orientation, the vertical inscriptions B. 3 and B. 6–8, which are in any case too high up to read from the ground, may be seen as 'memoranda to God'.

S. B. 13 as historical propaganda

At the end of this survey come three inscriptions which focus attention on the relations between Qartmin Abbey and the villages of Beth Svirina and Beth Man'em:

- B. 13 The names of the bishops of this abbey from one thousand one hundred and sixty of the Greeks (848/9): Nonnus of Ḥarran, Ezekiel of Ḥaḥ, Samuel of Beth Man'em, Ezekiel, John, Iwannis, Ignatius, Severus, Ḥabib of Beth Man'em, Joshua of Qartmin, Joseph of Beth Svirina, John of Beth Svirina (the initiator of the calligraphic revival), Zakay, whose accession was disputed, Lazarus of Beth Svirina, Shamly, the sinner, of Beth Man'em, who acceded in the year one thousand four hundred (1088/9) and wrote this memorial; and in his hard and trouble-filled time, this abbey was sacked in a cruel raid by the Persians and it was ruined and deserted for five years with all of Ṭur 'Abdin; and the raiders camped in the Great Temple (i.e. the conventual church) for fourteen days.

This inscription (fig. 51) has been immured in the western external wall of the conventual church, blocking a former opening into the nave. The last part of the inscription suggests that this is its original position: the opening was closed as a precaution against further invasion of the church.

A full account of the invasion (actually 'Turkish' or Seljuk: Pogon, *Inscriptions*, p. 49 n. 5) survives in the *Book of Life* (Baršawn, *TA*, pp. 91–2): it occurred in 1099/1100. The abbey was plundered of 'all its possessions and furniture, objects of bronze and iron, vessels, vestments, hanging-lamps, books and valuables. This book, too, fell into their hands. They tore it up ... some of its leaves they took as far as Nisibis. But we made diligent researches until we found ... what had fallen out of it. When we put it together, we found ... only one page was missing ... All the rest we restored.' The community found itself very short of literate and ordained monks. They took refuge with the other inhabitants of Ṭur 'Abdin (here spelled 'Ṭur 'Abdin', as in B. 11) below

the castle of Ṣawro. There was a severe famine: 'a measure of wheat reached 50 dinars ... barley likewise; six buckets of acorns (were sold) for 100 dinars'. The rains had been insufficient in the previous winter and now, in the early autumn (when ploughing and sowing begins and when the villages pile up stores for the winter), 'a bucket of seed reached thirty or forty zuz and two containers of grape-molasses went for a dinar in the interior of Ṭur 'Abdin'. The refugees moved from Ṣawro to the castle of Haytam (closer to the fertile plain?), 'and in that castle we restored this book. This was done by Basil, namesake of his bishop, Basil Shamly of Beth Man'em'.

The *Book of Life* was highly prized, but easily damaged. When he returned to his abbey after five years, the bishop was moved to make a more lasting record on stone, a record of a kind unknown in that region. He imported (from Badibbe?) a highly crystallized red limestone, as durable as marble, for the inscription. But what motivated him to give pride of place in the memorial to a list of the bishops who had preceded him?

With the exception of Gabriel (cf. A. 3), Shamly was the first bishop to be appointed for the abbey and its villages alone. In 1088/9 a separate bishop was ordained for Ṭur 'Abdin with his seat in the ancient cathedral village of Ḥaḥ. Previous bishops of Ṭur 'Abdin since 613 had resided at Qartmin and Ḥaḥ had been deprived of its earlier status for more than four and a half centuries. The innovation of dividing the diocese had a dubious precedent in the mid-eighth century (see pp. 173, 180). The prominence in B. 13 of Beth Man'em, Beth Svirina and Qartmin, all villages in south-eastern Ṭur 'Abdin, as producers of bishops suggests a possible motive for the division: these villages were felt by the rest of Ṭur 'Abdin to have disproportionate influence in the diocese by reason of their relationship with the abbey.

Qartmin Abbey had therefore suffered a blow to its prestige shortly before it was shaken and emptied by an act of undeclared war. In commemorating the latter Shamly contrived to make good the former. He introduced his predecessors as 'bishops of this abbey' and suppressed the fact that their official title had been 'Bishop of Ṭur 'Abdin' – the very title now carried by Shamly's rival in Ḥaḥ, whom Shamly hoped by this ruse to deprive of an august line of succession. The inscription is propaganda for the primacy of the see at Qartmin.

The official Register of ordinations begins in 793. The following is a list of the bishops of Ṭur 'Abdin between that date and the date of B. 13, as recorded in *Chr. Michael* 1195, pp. 753–65:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Thomas (xvii.7) | 9 Ḥabib (xxv.10) |
| 2 Sergius (xvii.44) | 10 Ignatius (xxv.42) |
| 3 Ezekiel (xvii.78) | 11 Severus (xxviii.4) |
| 4 Nonnus (xviii.89) | 12 Iwannis (xxix.8) |
| 5 Ezekiel (xxi.14) | 13 Joseph (xxx.22) |
| 6 John (xxi.19) | 14 John (xxx.26) |
| 7 Samuel (xxiii.20) | 15 Iwannis Zakay (xxxii.12) |
| 8 Iwannis (xxiv.11) | 16 Basil (xxxiii.11) |

17 Gregory (xl.8)

Why did not Shamly begin his list earlier? He clearly failed to apply to the patriarchal archives for a copy of the official Register. His list is in correct order backwards as far as Joshua of Qartmin (called 'Iwannis' in the Register, that being the name he adopted at ordination to the episcopate; likewise Zakay is 'Iwannis from the monastery of 'Abedh' and Lazarus and Shamly are both 'Basil'); thus far oral tradition would have served, for the time-span is little over a hundred years. Before that the order of bishops is confused. The date given for Nonnus' accession is wrong (cf. p. 11) and his immediate predecessor, Ezekiel, is presented as one of his successors; several others are out of place. If Shamly's source gave the names of bishops, but not their dates, this would explain the muddle. The *Book of Life* is just such a source; moreover, during its restoration the order of pages may have been confused. Perhaps Shamly's initial idea was to transfer some important names from the patently vulnerable *Book of Life* to durable stone; the propagandistic use of this list then suggested itself.

T. A.18 and an unregistered metropolitan of Nisibis

A.18 is from some building now demolished at Qartmin Abbey: five years ago it was immured, misleadingly, in the arcade outside the church of the Mother of God. The text had to be fitted in around two crosses and an accidental hole in the surface of the stone:

A.18 Abraham, metropolitan of Nisibis, and his great-uncle Gabriel, monk and priest, and Malke, deacon, (all) of Beth Svritina, (made) this chamber in the year one thousand and five hundred (1188/9) of [Greece]. Let every one who reads (this) pray for them!

The Register of ordinations gives the names of fifteen bishops of Nisibis. The earliest, Abraham (fl. 637), was a metropolitan. Those ordained between 793 and c. 900 were bishops. Between 910 and 922 another Abraham was ordained as metropolitan and this title was given to all his successors, except Athanasius (ordained between 1041/2 and 1057). The Abraham of A.18 is unknown from other sources. He must have been ordained by the patriarch Michael I himself after Michael had made the definitive copy of the Register which he attached to his Chronicle. This inscription again attests a close bond between Beth Svritina and Qartmin Abbey, of which, like many bishops of Nisibis, Abraham and his uncle were probably *alumni*.

U. A.19 and the ascendancy of the village of Beth Svritina

The *Book of Life* was removed at an unknown date after 1105 from Qartmin to Beth Svritina and this village features more and more prominently in its pages, while the abbey begins to take on the appearance of a dependency. Barsawm, T.4, pp. 165–6 contains an extract from a record in the *Book of Life* concerning Thomas, the son of Sovo, headman of Beth Svritina, and his three sons, Rabban Simeon, Rabban Abu'l-Khayr and Abu'l-Faraj. Thomas bought out all the Muslims in the village and secured their definitive removal by means of oaths and legal deeds in the year 1167. He proceeded, with his sons, to improve and to add to the buildings both of Beth Svritina and of Qartmin Abbey. They also built profitable hostels on the thoroughfares of the plateau. Further, 'Around the great church of Mor Dotho and Mor Aho and Mor Oso and Mor Isaiiah (of Aleppo) they built a large courtyard with a high tower and they made (it into) a robust fortress with a sturdy wall and many chambers.'

Although this record ends with a reference to 'Thomas and his sons, late departed', there is an inscription above the entrance to the church of Mor Dotho which records work commissioned by one of the sons alone in 1198/9:

A.19 This church was renovated, together with the yard in front of it, and Rabban Simeon, the son of Thomas, donated the vault and also the cistern in the yard (in) the year one thousand five hundred and ten of the Greeks. Let every one who reads (this) pray for him and for all who participated, whether by word or by deed.

Conclusion

After 1200 the art of epigraphy declined in Tur Abdin. The importance of monasteries waned while that of the villages waxed; this applies especially to Beth Svritina and to Hah. A new period of the history of Tur Abdin began, which is not the subject of this book. The inscriptions of the early period yield more than dates and names. They can be used as evidence for the differences and the social balance between village and monastery, cleric and layman. They can help to chart economic depression and recovery. To those who know the Syrian Orthodox of present-day Tur Abdin the emphasis of its 'speaking stones' on religious monuments and the religious dead and the importance they give to the concepts of commemoration, continuity and regeneration will come as no surprise.

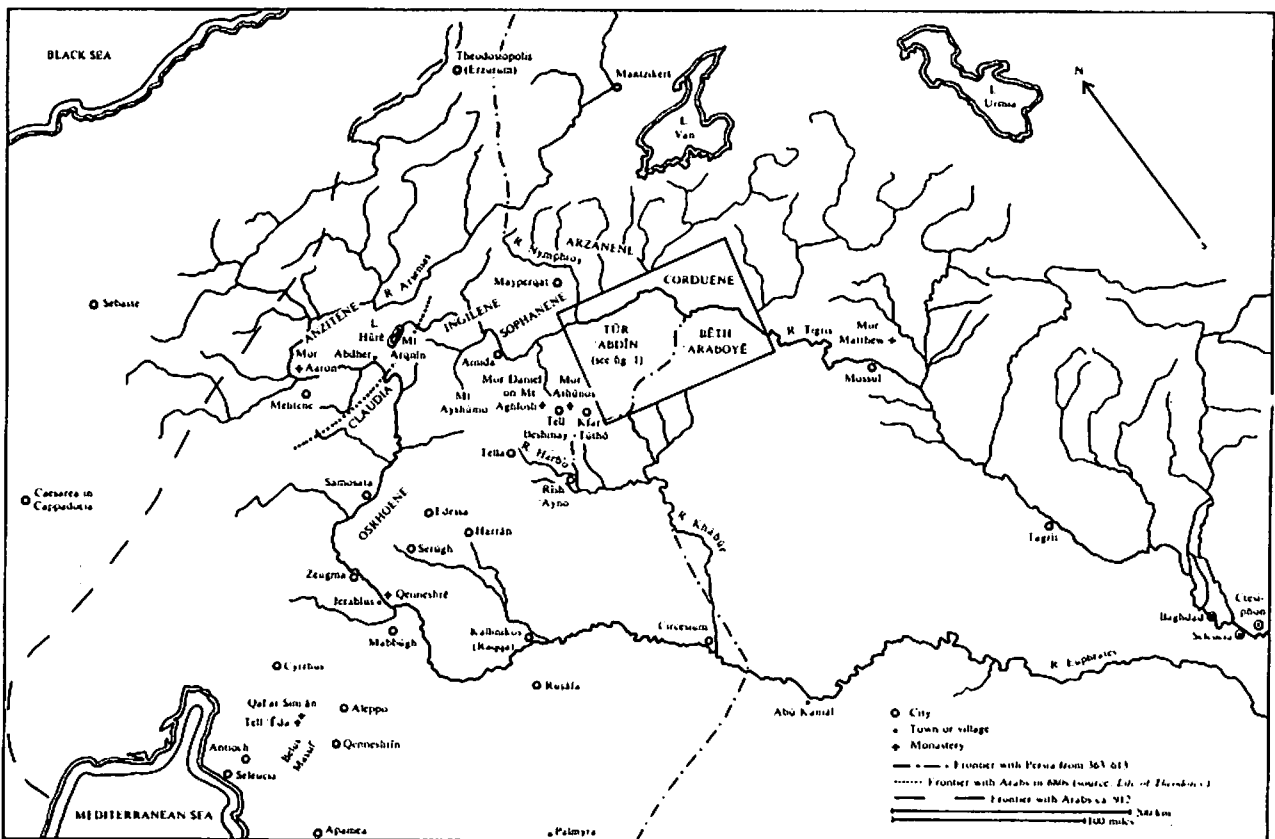


Fig. 58. Map of the Tigris and Euphrates basins, showing Roman frontiers and places mentioned in this book

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Sources

In citing the sources, I have abandoned the conventions familiar to specialists, but perplexing to others, in favour of a system which enables the reader to see at a glance which genre is in question (chronicle, hagiography, letter, etc.) and to orientate his thoughts according to the essential critical coordinates (in the case of a chronicle: author/'probable author', or place/'probable place' of composition (or, both failing, 'editor'), followed by the last date chronicled/approximate date of composition; in the case of a hagiography, whether it may in any sense be classified as a biography ('Life'), or not ('Legend'). The following abbreviations are used:

- ET, FT, GT, LT English, French, German, Latin translation based on the edition here referred to and including page or section references to it.
- ET, FT, GT, LT English (etc.) translation not based on the edition here referred to.
- Glane Publication of the Syrian Orthodox archdiocese in Europe, obtainable from St Ephrem der Syrer Klooster, Glanerbrugstraat 33, 7585 PK Glane/Losser, Netherlands

'MS Dam. 12/17' or '12/18' refers to a collection of hagiographical texts now bound in two volumes, 12/17 and 12/18 of the collection in the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate at Damascus. There are three columns to the page, so the references take the form: fol. 66b.3, i.e. folio 66, verso, column 3. A *terminus post quem* for this MS is given by the colophon of the *Life of Abhay* on fol. 42b.1-2 of MS Dam. 12/18, which was composed by the patriarch Michael I in 1184/5. The copyist added a short, anonymous note of his own, showing that he was not Michael himself. The date attributed to the Damascus MS by the author of a Garshuni (Syro-Arabic) version in the monastery of St Mark, Jerusalem, is therefore too early and must rest on an error (cf. I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran*. Subsidia Hagiographica 49 (Brussels, 1971), p. 25). The simplest explanation of the error suggests that MS Dam. 12/17-18 was written between 1185 and 1188.

I Syriac

IA Syriac Chronicles, in chronological order

- 1 *Chr. Edessa* 506

- Chr. Zuqnin* 775, I, pp. 235-317 ('Joshua the Stylite'), with LT; FT: J.P.P. Martin, 1873; ET: W. Wright, 1882.
- 2 *Chr. Edessa* 540
Chronica minora, I, ed. I. Guidi (1903), pp. 1-14, with LT; ET: B.H. Cowper, in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 5 (1864), pp. 28-45; GT: L. Hallier, 1893.
- 3 *Chr. Amida* 569
Historia ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta, II, ed. E.W. Brooks (1921), with LT; ET: F.J. Hamilton and E.W. Brooks, 1899; GT: K. Ahrens, 1899 [References include book, chapter and page].
- 4 *Chr. John Eph.* 585
Johannis Ephesini historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia, ed. E.W. Brooks (1935), with LT; ET: R. Payne Smith, 1860; GT: J.M. Schönfelder, 1862.
- 5 *Chr. 'John Eph. 585'* II.5 extract = fol. 189 of the Oxford MS Bodley Huntington 52. Reproduction and ET in E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory*, II (1932) (supposedly an extract from Bk 5 of Pt II of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*).
- 6 *Chr. 'Guidi'* 7th cent.
Chronica minora, I, ed. I. Guidi (1903), pp. 15-39, with LT.
- 7 *Chr. Zuqnin* 775
Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum, II, ed. J.-B. Chabot (1933); FT (based on an earlier and incomplete edition): J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Denys de Tell-Mahré; quatrième partie* (Paris, 1895), quoted, in the absence of a better translation: [Chabot, p. 10].
- 8 *Chr. 'Brooks'* 813
Chronica minora, II, ed. E.W. Brooks (1904), pp. 243-60, with LT (J.-B. Chabot); ET: E.W. Brooks, in *ZDMG* 54 (1900), pp. 217-30.
- 9 *Chr. Qartmin* 819
Chronicon anonymum ad annum Domini 819 pertinens, ed. A. Barsaum, in *Chr. 'Edessa'* 1234, I, pp. 3-22, with LT (J.-B. Chabot).
- 10 *Chr. 'Harran'* 846
Chronica minora, II, ed. E.W. Brooks (1904), pp. 157-238, with LT (J.-B. Chabot); ET: E.W. Brooks, in *ZDMG* 51 (1897), pp. 579-88 (part only).
- 11 *Chr. Elijah* 1018
Eliae metropolitae Nisibeni opus chronologicum, I, ed. E.W. Brooks (1910), with LT; GT: F. Baethgen, 1884 (part only); FT: L.-J. Delaporte, 1910.
- 12 *Chr. Michael* 1195
Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche 1166-1199, ed. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1899-1910), with FT [Reference to book, chapter, column, page; a = middle column or secular history, b = inner column or miscellaneous, natural and anecdotal events, c = outer column or church history].
- 13 *Chr. 'Edessa'* 1234
Anonymi auctoris chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens, I, ed. J.-B. Chabot (1920), with LT.
- 14 *Chr. Gregory* I

Gregorii Barhebraei chronicon syriacum [ed. P. Bedjan] (Paris, 1890): *ET* (to be used with E. Honigmann's corrections in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 37 [1934], cols. 273-83); E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory*, 1 (1932), [N.B. The text edited by Bedjan ends in the last decade of the thirteenth century; it was considered by the author as the first part of his history, the following item representing the second and third parts:]

15 *Chr. Gregory II, III*

Gregorii Barhebraei chronicon ecclesiasticum, ed. J.-B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy (Louvain, 1872-77), with *LT* N.B. The text edited here is continued until the last decade of the fifteenth century; the publication consists of two parts in three fascicules].

16 *Chr. Addai 1503*

Continuation by the priest Addai of Beth Svirina (see Barsawm, *KBB*, pp. 567-8) of *Chr. Gregory I*, reproduced from the Oxford MS Bodley Huntington 52 with *ET* by E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory*, II (1932).

1B Syriac hagiographies, in alphabetical order

The legends (*Leg.*) are all set in the fourth century. In the case of the more or less historical biographies (*L.*), the date of the saint's death is shown in this list. For a series of *Lives*, the date of composition is given. These dates do not belong to the *sigla*.

1 *Berlin Paraphrase* (1710)

Berlin MS Sachau 221, foll. 41b-114b, a paraphrase of the *Qarmin Trilogy*, with some interesting additions; cf. Sachau, *MSS Berlin*, No. 179, pp. 577-90.

2 *Leg. Aaron*

ed. F. Nau, *PO* 5.5 (1910), pp. [295-341], with *FT*.

3 *L. Aho* (tc.560)

MS Vatican Siniaco 37, foll. 176a-191b; extracts and a summary in Vööbus, *Aha*.

4 *Leg. Awgin*

AMS 3, pp. 376-480.

5 *L. Barsawmo* (†458)

MS Dam. 12/17, foll. 71b-97b; summary (based on the MSS in London): F. Nau, in *ROC* 18 (1913), pp. 272-6, 379-89; *ROC* 19 (1914), pp. 113-34, 278-89. Edition (Palmer) in preparation.

6 *L. Daniel* (†439)

MS Dam. 12/17, foll. 97b-101b; summary (based on the MS in Paris): F. Nau, in *ROC* 15 (1920), pp. 60-4. Edition (Palmer) in preparation.

7 *L.L. Eastern Saints* (566-8)

John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. E.W. Brooks, *PO* 17.1, 18.4, 19.2 (1923-5), with *ET*.

8 *L. Jacob* (†421)

MS Dam. 12/17, foll. 173a-181a; cf. Dolabani, *History of the Monastery of Mor Jacob at Salakh* (1973), pp. 9-35; summary (based on the most ancient MS in London): F. Nau, in *ROC* 20 (1915-17), pp. 1-32. Edition (Aydin) in preparation.

9 *L. Jacob Baradaeus II* (†578)

Spurious Life of Jacob, ed. E.W. Brooks, in *PO* (1925), pp. [574-619], with *ET*. [N.B. The Syriac form of the Latin Baradaeus is Burd'ono, not, as is written with alarming frequency, Bar Addai.]

10 *L. John bar Aphthonia* (†537)

ed. F. Nau (Paris, 1902), with *FT*; also ed. *id.*, in *ROC* 7 (1902), pp. 97-135 [Reference to section].

11 *L. John bar Shayvallah* (†1493)

Cambridge MS Dd. 3.8¹, foll. 82-7; cf. Wright, *MSS Cambridge*, pp. 979-85; Barsawm, *KBB*, pp. 563-4. Edition (Palmer) in preparation.

12 *Leg. John of Kfone*

cited by Barsawm, *TA*, pp. 15-16; partially preserved in the Paris MS, Syriac 379, foll. 1a-6a (I am grateful to F. Graffin, S.J., for a handwritten copy).

13 *L. John of Nhel* (tc.625)

ed. S.P. Brock, in *Or. Lovan. Per.* 9 (1978), pp. 100-18, with *ET*.

14 *L. John of Tellia* (†538)

Vitae virorum apud monophysitas celeberrimorum, ed. E.W. Brooks (1907), pp. 23-95, with *LT* (1907); Dutch trans.: H.G. Kleyn, 1882.

15 *Leg. Malke*

AMS, 5, pp. 421-69.

16 *L. Philoxenos* (†523)

MS Harvard Syriac 38, foll. 11b-121b (I am grateful to Dr S.P. Brock for a copy of his own transcription); *ET* (partial; perhaps based on a Manchester MS): A. Mingana, in *The Expositor* 20 (1920), pp. 140-60.

17 *Eti de Qarimîn*

Eti de Qarimîn: Mémorâ sur S. Mar Philoxène de Mabbôg, ed. A. de Halleux (1963), with *FT* [derivative from No. 17, but better published].

18 *Leg. Pinhes*

AMS, 5, pp. 208-18.

19 *Qarimîn Trilogy*

The *Lives of Samuel* (tc.410), Simeon (†433) and Gabriel (†648), edited by A.N. Palmer with *ET*, and appended on microfiche to this book.

20 *L. Simeon of Olives* (†734)

MS Mardin, Syrian Orthodox 8.259, pp. 203-47 (I am grateful to the late Rabban Gabriel Allâf for permission to photograph this MS); cf. Dolabani, *History of the Holy Abbey of Qarimîn* (Mardin, 1959), pp. 125-60; summary of the latter by S.P. Brock, in *Ostik. St.* 28 (1979), pp. 174-9. Edition (Brock/Palmer) in preparation.

21 *L. Simeon Stylites* (†459)

- AMS, 4, pp. 507–665; GT: H. Hilgenfeld, in Hilgenfeld/Lietzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites* (1908), pp. 80–180.
- 22 *Leg. Sovo*
AMS, 4, pp. 222–49; summary: Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (1880), pp. 22–8.
- 23 *L. Theodotus* (†698)
MS Dam. 12/18, foll. 58a–69b. Edition (Palmer) in preparation. cf. A. Vööbus, in *Mus* 89 (1976), pp. 39–42; A. Palmer, 'The Anatomy of a Mobile Monk', forthcoming in *Studia Patristica* XVIII, 2; *id.*, 'Saints' Lives with a Difference', *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 229 (1987), pp. 203–16.
- 24 Thomas of Marga (840)
The Book of Governors, by Thomas of Marga, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge, 2 vols. (London, 1893), with *ET*. Reference to book, chapter, page [and page in the edition of P. Bedjan, *Liber superiorum* (Paris, 1901)].

IC Miscellaneous Syriac sources

- 1 *Acts Ephesus 449*
Akten der ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449, ed. J. Flemming (Berlin, 1917), with *GT* (Hoffmann).
- 2 Barsalibi, *Comm. Ev.*, II(1)
Dionysii Bar Šaltbi commentarii in evangelia, II(1), edd. J.V. Sedláček and J.-B. Chabot (1906), with *LT*.
- 3 *Book of Hierotheos*
ed. F.S. Marsh, *The Book which is called The Book of the Holy Hierotheos with Extracts from the Prolegomena and Commentary of Theodosius of Antioch and from the 'Book of Excerpts' and Other Works by Gregory Bar Hebraeus* (London and Oxford, 1927).
- 4 *Book of Life*
The Book of Life (Syriac: *šfar hayē*) of the Abbey of Qartmin and of Beth Svirina, cited where possible from Baršawm, *TA*, pp. 91–6; otherwise from the recent MS at Qartmin (a copy of which is appended in microfiche to this book, with *ET*).
- 5 *Cal. Edessa 411*
'Un martyrologe syriaque', ed. F. Nau, in *PO* 10.1 (1912), pp. [11–28], with *FT*.
- 6 *Cal. Syr.*
'Douze ménologes syriaques', ed. F. Nau, in *PO* 10.1 (1912), pp. [29–56], with *FT*.
- 7 *Cal. TA*
'Le Martyrologe de Rabban Sliba', ed. P. Peeters, *Anal. Boll.* 27 (1908), pp. 129–200, with *LT* [reference by day of month, e.g. '3 Dec.'].
8 *Can. E-Syr.*
Synodicon Orientale, ed. J.-B. Chabot. Notices et extraits de la bibliothèque nationale 37 (Paris, 1902), with *FT*; GT: O. Braun, 1900; English summary

- with extracts in translation in McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity* (1982).
- 9 *Can. Gregory*
Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris, 1898); *LT* in A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio* (Rome, 1838), vol. 10.11, pp. 3–268; *FT* (partial and reordered); F. Nau, *Ancienne littérature canonique syriaque* (Paris, 1906).
- 10 *Can. Mor Zakay*
ed. A. Vööbus, in *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm, 1960), p. 61: the surviving 48th canon of the Rule written by John of Tella for the monks of Mor Zakay by Kallinikos, with *ET*.
- 11 *Can. 'Rabbula'*
ed. A. Vööbus, *ibid.*, pp. 80–6: 'rules attributed to Rabbula', with *ET*.
- 12 *Can. W-Syr.*
The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition, prepared for publication by A. Vööbus, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1975–6), with *ET*. The *ET* is so unreliable that I refer where possible to the *FT*: [F. Nau, *Ancienne littérature canonique syriaque* (Paris, 1906)].
- 13 Cyril, *Comm. Luc.*
S. Cyrilli Alexandrini commentarii in Lucam, ed. J.-B. Chabot (1912), with *LT* (Tonneau), 1953.
- 14 *Doc. Monoph.*
Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas, ed. J.-B. Chabot (1908), with *LT* (1933).
- 15 Ephrem, *Comm. Gen.*
Sancti Ephraemi Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii, ed. R.M. Tonneau (1955), with *LT*.
- 16 *Fasti*
I Fasti della chiesa patriarcale d'Antiochia, ed. I.E. Rahmani (Rome, 1920).
- 17 George of B'eltan, *Commentary on St Matthew's Gospel*, cited in *OC* 2 (1902), p. 442.
- 18 Gregory Barhebraeus, *The Laughable Stories*, ed. E.A. Wallis Budge (London, 1896), with *ET* (occasional *LT pudoris causa*).
- 19 *INSCR.* A.4; *INSCR.* B.1–7
Inscription or inscriptions belonging to the corpus published in *OC* 71 (1987) containing *INSCR.* A.1–20, B.1–13, C.1–14, D.1–15; *ET* of most of these in the Appendix of this book.
- 20 *Inscr. J* 32
Inscription cited by its number in the collection made by J. Jarry, 'Inscriptions syriaques et arabes inédites du Tour 'Abdin', *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (1972), pp. 207–50, with *FT* [unreliable].
- 21 *Inscr. P* 64
Inscription cited by its number in the collection made by Pognon, *Inscriptions*, with *FT*.

- 22 *Lett. Philox. G. I*
'The First Letter to the Monks of Beth-Gaugal', in *Three Letters of Philoxenos, Bishop of Mabbōgh (485-519)*, ed. A.A. Vaschalde (Rome, 1902), pp. 146-62, with *ET*, pp. 105-18.
- 23 *Lett. Philox. G. II*
'La Deuxième Lettre de Philoxène aux monastères du Beit Gaugal', ed. A. de Halleux, *Mus* 96 (1983), pp. 5-79, with *FT*.
- 24 *Lett. Severus v*
The Fifth Book of the Select Letters of Severus of Antioch in the Syriac Translation by Athanasius of Nisibis, ed. E.W. Brooks vol. 5 (London, 1904), with *ET*.
- 25 *Lett. Sim. B. Arsham on Nestorius*
Epistola Simeonis Beth-Arsamensis de Barsauma episcopo Nisibeno, deque haeresi Nestorianorum, ed. J.S. Assemani, *BO* I, pp. 346-58.
- 26 *Lett. 530*
'Une pastorale antijulianiste des environs de 530', ed. R. Draguet, *Mus* 40 (1927), pp. 75-92 [cf. I.E. Rahmani, *Studia Siriaca*, I (Sharfeh, 1904), pp. 25-6].
- 27 *Sugitho*
[Hymn on the Sixth-Century Church at Edessa], ed. with *ET* by A.N. Palmer in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12 (1988), pp. 117-67.

Key to volume-numbers, old and new, of CSCO editions:

Syr. II	CSCO	Scr. Syr.	My list
37	17, 103	17, 52	C.14
98	15, 16	15, 16	C.2
Syr. III			
2, T.	104	53	A.7
3	105, 106	54, 55	A.4
4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	A.2, 6, 8, 10
6	84, 88	39, 42	A.3
7	62*, 63*	21, 23	A.11(I)
8	62**, 63**	22, 24	A.11(II)
14	81, 109	36, 56	A.9, 13
25	7, 8	7, 8	B.14
Syr. IV			
I	70, 140	27, 70	C.13
—	152, 153	71, 72	C.15
—	233, 234	100, 101	B.16b
—	367, 368, 375, 376	161, 162, 163, 164	C.12

ID Catalogues of Syriac manuscripts

- 1 Assemani, *MSS Vatican*
S.E. and J.S. Assemani, *Bibliothecae apostolicae Clementino-Vaticanae codd. mss catalogus in tres partes distributus*, 1.2, 3 (Rome, 1758, 1759).

- 2 Mingana, *MSS Birmingham*
A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of MSS, I: Syriac and Garshuni MSS* (Cambridge, 1933).
- 3 Rosen/Forshall, *MSS London*
F. Rosen and J. Forshall, *Catalogus codicum mss orientalium, Pars II codd. syriacos et carshunicos amplectens* (London, 1838).
- 4 Sachau, *MSS Berlin*
E. Sachau, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Hss. Die Handschriftenverzeichnisse der Kgl. Bibliothek zu Berlin XXIII* (Berlin, 1899).
- 5 Wright, *MSS Cambridge*
W. Wright and S.A. Cook, *A Catalogue of the Syriac MSS Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1901).
- 6 Wright, *MSS London*
W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac MSS in the British Library acquired since the year 1838*, 3 vols. (London, 1870-2).
- 7 Zotenberg, *MSS Paris*
H. Zotenberg, *Manuscripts orientaux. Catalogue des mss syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la bibliothèque nationale* (Paris, 1874).

IE Syriac dictionaries

- 1 Awdo, *Lex.*
T. Awdo, *simtā d-lēšānā sūryāyā [Thesaurus of the Syriac Language]*, in Syriac (Urmia, 1896; rep. Glane, 1985).
- 2 Brockelmann, *Lex.*
K. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, revised edition (Göttingen, 1928).
- 3 Payne Smith, *Lex.*
Thesaurus Syriacus, ed. etc. R. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1879-1901).

II Latin, Greek and Arabic sources

- 1 Abu Yusuf
abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, *kitāb al-kharāj [The Book of the Tax]* (Cairo, AH 1352): *FT*: E. Fagnan, *Abou Yousof Ya'qoub: Le livre de l'impôt foncier* (Paris, 1921).
- 2 ACO
Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, ed. E. Schwartz.
- 3 Agapius
Agapius [Maḥbūb], *kitāb al-'unwān [Universal History]*, 2.2, ed. Vasiliev, *P.O.* 8 (1912), with *FT*.
- 4 Ambrose, *expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. C. Schenkl, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 32, IV (1902).
- 5 Ammianus
Ammien Marcellin, *Histoire*, ed. E. Galletier (Paris: Budé, 1968-), with *FT*.
- 6 Baladhuri
al-Balādhuri, *futūḥ al-buldān, [The Conquest of the Countries]* ed. de Goeje

- (Leiden, 1866) [also ed. Munajjid (Cairo, 1957)]; *ET*: P.K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* 1 (New York, 1916) and F.C. Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State* 2 (New York, 1924).
- 7 *Codex Theodosianus*
ed. P. Krueger (Berlin, 1923–6: partial); *ET*: C. Pharr (Princeton, 1952).
- 8 Evagrius
Evagrii Scholastici Historia Ecclesiastica, ed. H. Valesius, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne, LXXXVI.2 (Paris, 1865), cols. 2415–2886, with *LT*;
ET J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia* (London, 1898).
- 9 George of Cyprus
Georgii Cyprii Descriptio Orbis Romani, ed. H. Gelzer (Leipzig, 1890) [with reference to Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des römischen Reiches* (1935)].
- 10 Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*
[*Sophr. Euseb. Hieronymus Stridonensis*], *Vita di Ilarione*, ed. A.A.R. Bastiaensen. *Scrittori Greci e Latini: Vite dei Santi* 4, ed. Christine Mohrmann (Milan, 1975), with Italian trans. (Moreschini).
- 11 John of Epiphaneia
ed. C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, 4 (Paris, 1851), pp. 272–6, with *LT*.
- 12 Lucian, *de dea Syria*
Luciani Opera, ed. M.D. Macleod, 3 (Oxford, 1980).
- 13 Luitprand, *Antapodosis*
Luitprand of Cremona [Ticinensis], *Antapodosis. Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, revised by A. Bauer and R. Rau. *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. R. Buchner, 8 (Darmstadt, 1971).
- 14 Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, ed. T. Mommsen, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi, xi. Chronica minora*, II (Berlin, 1894), pp. 60–104.
- 15 *Notit. Antioch.*
Notitia Antiochenia, as reconstituted by E. Honigmann, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), pp. 60–88.
- 16 *Notit. Dign.*
Notitia Dignitatum, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin, 1876).
- 17 Paul the Silentiary, *Description of Hagia Sophia*
ed. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza et Paulus Silentiarius* (Leipzig, 1912; reprint Berlin, 1969).
- 18 Procopius, *Buildings, Secret History, Wars*
Procopius, *de aedificiis, historia quae dicuntur arcana, bella*, ed. J. Haury, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1962–4) [also ed. Dewing/Downey, with *ET*, 7 vols. (London, 1914–40)].
- 19 Ptolemy, *Geography*
Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia, 1.2, ed. C. Müller (Paris, 1901).
- 20 Socrates
Socratis Scholastici Historia Ecclesiastica, ed. H. Valesius, in *Patrologia*

- Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne, LXVII (Paris, 1859), cols. 29–172, with *LT*; also ed. R. Hussey, 3 vols., 1853, repr. with index by W. Bright (Oxford, 1878); *ET* in the Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, II.2 (New York, 1890).
- 21 Sozomen
Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. J. Bidez, revised with an introduction by G.C. Hansen (Berlin, 1960); *ET* in the Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, II.2 (New York, 1890); *FT* in *Sources Chrétiennes* 306 (Paris, 1983).
- 22 Strabo
Strabo, *Geography*, ed. H.L. Jones, 8 vols. (London, 1923–32), with *ET*.
- 23 Tabari
Muhammad b. Jarir al Tabari, *Ta'rikh al rusul wa'l muluk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al. (Leyden, 1879–1910).
- 24 Theodoret, *Hist. Phil.* XXVI
Theodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des moines de Syrie. 'Histoire Philothée'* XIV–XXX, ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, I (Paris, 1979), No. XXVI, Symeon the Stylite, with *FT*.
- 25 Theophylact
Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae, ed. de Boor, revised by P. Wirth (Stuttgart, 1972); *ET*: Mary and Michael Whitby (Oxford, 1986); *GT*: P. Schreiner, *Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur* 20 (Stuttgart, 1985).
- 26 [Ps.-]Waqidi
futuh diyarrabi' wa-diyarbakr [*The Conquest of Diyar Rabi' and Diyar Bekr, i.e. Mesopotamia and part of Armenia*], MS 93 of the Royal Library of Copenhagen, foll. 1–66a (not consulted by me); *GT*: B.G. Niebuhr [revised and completed by A.D. Mordtmann], *Geschichte der Eroberung von Mesopotamien und Armenien von Mohammad ben Omar el-Wakedi*. *Schriften der Akademie von Ham*, 1.3 (Hamburg, 1847).
- 27 Yaqut
Yaqut, *mu'jam al-buldān* [*Topographical Encyclopaedia*], F. Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73).

Secondary literature

1. Works cited by short title

All titles, apart from articles, that are cited five times or more in the notes, and some lengthy titles that are cited even less frequently, are abbreviated, as follows:

Abramowski, *Dionysius*

R. Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre, jakobitischer Patriarch von 818–845: zur Geschichte der Kirche unter dem Islam*. *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 25.2 (1940), pp. 1–142.

AMS

Acta martyrum et sanctorum, ed. P. Bedjan, 7 vols. (Paris, 1890–7).

BO

J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vols. I–III, i, ii (Rome, 1719–28).

Baršawm, KBB

I.E. Baršawm, *kišbā d-bērūlē bdīrē* [The Book of Scattered Pearls], or *A History of Syriac Culture*, in Syriac (Qamishly, 1958), being a translation from the Arabic *al-lu'lu' al-manšūr fī ta'riḫ al-'ulūm wa-l-ādāb as-suryāniyya* [The Scattered Pearls in the History of Syriac Science and Literature]: *Histoire des sciences et de la littérature syriaque* (Aleppo, 1956²; repr. Glane, 1987).

Baršawm, TA

I.E. Baršawm, *maktbānūtā d-'al atrā d-ṭūr 'abdīn* [Monograph on the Region of Ṭūr 'Abdīn], in Syriac (here referred to) and Arabic (Lebanon, 1964); reprint of Syriac original, with supplement on 'Ṭūr 'Abdīn 1950-1985' and a much needed list of contents (Glane, 1985). N.B. The Syriac is based on original materials and is not a translation of the Arabic, as Fiey implies in *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981-2) by his reference to the Arabic page numbers only; the only independent value of the Arabic translation is in correcting misprints in the Syriac.

Baumstark, Geschichte

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